

Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 29

Daolord

I Eat Tomatoes

(我吃西红柿)

Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller...than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 1: Spacetime Disc

Rumble...

A streak of sword-light was flying through the transversal conduit.

Ji Ning flew incredibly fast when using the Blood Drop evasion skill, but the transversal conduit was simply too long. It had taken their group over three years to fly from the Brightshore Kingdom to the alternate universe. Still, by now Ning flew twice as fast as he had in the past.

“Here I am.” When Ning saw the light up ahead, he couldn’t help but reveal a look of delight as he darted towards it.

In the instant that he flew through, Ning could sense... Su Youji! He could also sense his other true body clone! He could also sense the Primaltwin which was safeguarding the Three Realms.

“I’m back.” Ning laughed. He was home.

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The Endless Territories. The Badlands Territory. An unremarkable chaos planet.

Whoosh.

A figure suddenly appeared on the surface of this chaos planet. It was yet another white-robed Ji Ning.

“I’ve benefited tremendously from this trip to the alternate universe. I’ve now perfectly joined five Supreme Daos together! Although I can sense that this isn’t the true apex of the Dao of the Sword, I trust I’ll soon be able to break through to that level.” Ning had the feeling for some time now that he was very, very close to the true apex.

He had spent over six million accelerated years in the Trileaf Realm, and during that period of time this feeling had only grown stronger and stronger. It looked as though he hadn’t improved at all, but in reality he had been slowly accumulating experience in his Sword Dao. When it reached a certain level, it would burst forth!

“If I wish to become a Daolord, I must become one with my clone first. It is time for my clone to head off to Vastheaven Palace.” Ning smiled, then strode forwards. Whoosh! He instantly tore a hole in the space around him. By now, Ning’s sword-intent alone was completely capable of tearing a spatial tunnel open for him, allowing him to enter a different spatial continuum and move even faster through space.

His true body and its clone would reunite at Vastheaven Palace!

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The Brightshore Kingdom. The Sword Palace of the Twelve Palaces. Within an estate located at the very peak of one of the many awe-inspiring mountains in the Sword Palace.

This estate belonged to Ji Ning. Because Ning had yet to return, the gates to the estate remained barred firmly shut. Next to the estate there was a wooden house, with Flamefairy Su Youji having taken up temporary residence here.

Ever since she had returned from the alternate universe she had lived here, waiting for Ning.

“Master!” Su Youji had been meditating in the lotus position, but she suddenly opened her eyes, revealing a look of joy with them.

She could sense that Ji Ning had returned!

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The lofty peak of a mountain. This was the other end of the transversal conduit. When Ning exited the conduit, he appeared here. Moments later, a snow-robed old man with six horns and a white beard suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

“Hegemon.” Ning was in an extremely good mood due to having returned. When he saw the Hegemon suddenly appear, he couldn’t help but be badly startled and hurriedly bow.

“You are back.” The white-bearded elder had a smile on his face. “It is good that you are back. You were the last one to return from the alternate

universe.”

Ning was stunned. So Greatjoy, Solewind, and the others both returned as well.

“First, return the Archaeus medallion to me,” the white-bearded elder said.

“Yes.” Ning hurriedly produced the Archaeus medallion. It was now of no use to him, but the almighty Hegemon would be able to use it to allow other World-level cultivators to venture through the alternate universe in the future.

“Greatjoy, Solewind, and the others have already narrated what happened in the alternate universe to me. You once saved their lives, which is no small thing. As I said long ago, the better you perform, the heavier I shall reward you.” The white-bearded man smiled. “And I heard that you even managed to enter the inner reaches of the Genesis Lands...”

“It was luck,” Ning said.

“It wasn’t luck. Solewind, you, and Greatjoy all managed to make it inside. In the future, I imagine that the three of you will be every bit the equal of Eastcult and Bertulu,” the white-bearded elder said.

Ning was secretly surprised. So Greatjoy had made it into the inner reaches as well?

“This is a spacetime disc I created myself.” The white-bearded elder produced a strange disc of mixed white and black colors. “Through using this spacetime disk, you can flee through spacetime in a dangerous situation. It contains the power of a secret art which I personally infused into it. However, it can only be used once. After you use it the energy within will be consumed, making it unusable.”

As he spoke, he sent the strange disc towards Ning.

Ning was rather excited. Before going to the alternate universe, the almighty Hegemon had indeed said that if he provided assistance to Skyfire Brightshore, he would be richly rewarded upon his return. Still, he hadn’t expected the reward to be so ample.

“Given my mastery over the Dao of Spacetime, there won’t be many who can chase after you once you activate this spacetime disc.” The almighty Hegemon was completely confident in his abilities. “Still, you have to be careful. Major powers have countless abilities at their disposal, and some are so strong that you won’t even have a chance to use the disc. Thus, you still have to be careful.”

“Understood,” Ning said respectfully. Given how much Emperor Maniseal had doted on his disciple, he had most certainly provided his disciple with life-saving treasures. And yet, his disciple had still died by the hands of Emperor Trisilk.

“Hegemon, I wish to leave the Brightshore Kingdom for a time, but...” Ning said. Per the rules of the Brightshore Kingdom, one was generally permitted to leave only upon becoming a Daolord.

“Permission granted. Just go speak with Woodflower of your Sword Palace.” The white-robed elder nodded. “Be careful when voyaging through the outside world. You can easily die, given how weak you still are. Enough. You can go now.”

“Acknowledged.” Ning bowed respectfully, then used the nearby spacetime tunnel to first travel back to the imperial palace, then head to the Sword Palace.

The white-bearded old man nodded slightly as he watched Ning leave. “These young fellows have all benefited quite a bit, and Darknorth has undergone a truly earthshaking transformation. Now, even I can only barely sense what his destiny will be like.”

The Brightshore Kingdom’s grand strategy lay in the production of elites! The Daolords of the Brightshore Kingdom were, on average, much stronger than those of the Dao Alliance. However, they were also much fewer in number! As for Ji Ning, Bertulu, Greatjoy, and the others, they were the elites of the elites, the cream of the crop! The Brightshore Kingdom would naturally protect them carefully.

Giving Ning a spacetime disc as a form of ‘thanks’ was just an excuse! Even if he didn’t have this excuse, the Hegemon would’ve come up with

another excuse to give this monstrously talented kid a protective treasure.

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Ning stood there at the front entrance to the Sword Palace, staring at the beautiful, fiery-robed woman who stood at the other side of the entrance.

“Youji.” Ning smiled.

“Master.” Su Youji’s eyes were brimming with tears. She had actually benefited greatly from her visit to the Genesis Lands, and she had improved significantly as well. She was at the point where she could become a Daolord whenever she wished. However, she was too worried about Ning. When she returned to the Sword Palace, she simply couldn’t calm down and so she didn’t make her breakthrough.

Now, at least, she saw Ji Ning once more.

“Look at yourself! Your master won’t die that easily, you know.” Ning grinned.

“I knew you had to believe. Firesurge and those other bastards said that you...” Su Youji revealed a brilliant smile.

Ning’s gaze suddenly turned to someone who stood behind Su Youji.

“Ah. It seems I’ve disturbed the two of you.” A figure emerged from behind Su Youji, a smile on his face.

“Senior apprentice-brother Woodflower,” Ning immediately called out. The newcomer was indeed Lord Woodflower.

Lord Woodflower smiled as he looked at Ning. “I just learned from the Hegemon that you’ve returned. Solewind, Greatjoy, and the others all returned some time ago. You were the only one left. You really gave me a bad scare.”

When Ning hadn’t returned with the others, Woodflower really had been worried for quite some time.

“I’m back now, right?” Ning laughed.

“I imagine this trip was quite fruitful for you,” Lord Woodflower said.

“Not bad.” Ning grinned.

As far as treasures went, the deceased Hegemon had bestowed upon him a pair of Dao-seals, a suit of armor, and chaos nectar. The most precious treasures, of course, were those six lifeblood swords which Emperor Gonflame had labored over. Still... weapons and treasures, upon being bound, could have their auras restrained, making it so that outsiders couldn’t tell how powerful they were. Not even the almighty Hegemon had noticed how extraordinary Ning’s six swords and suit of armor were.

“As long as you benefited from it. When are you planning to become a Daolord?” Lord Woodflower asked.

“Soon. I need to make some further preparations,” Ning said. “Right. Senior apprentice-brother, I’m planning to leave the Brightshore Kingdom on a trip.”

“No problem.” Lord Woodflower nodded. “If you are going to leave, follow me. We’ll go light a heartlamp first.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded.

Heartlamps were lit through one’s own truesoul. Generally speaking, one would be able to sense right away when its master perished. Once its master perished, the heartlamp would be extinguished as well. But of course, if you entered an alternate universe or some particularly dangerous ruins, it was possible that the connection to the heartlamp would be severed.

Still, heartlamps and truesoul towers were amongst the best of life-sensing equipment. The connection was almost as perfect as the connection between a true body and a clone. The more casually created items like life-tablets had a much smaller area of effectiveness.

Chapter 2: Star Map

Ji Ning led Su Youji to follow Lord Woodflower into the Sword Palace. The Sword Palace had quite a few cultivators within it, but of course most were black-armored Daolords.

“Swordlord Darknorth has arrived.”

“It’s Swordlord Darknorth.”

“That’s Flamefairy Su Youji standing next to him.”

“He’s been gone for roughly eighty thousand years, right? I’m surprised that Lord Woodflower is actually welcoming him back personally.”

“Eighty thousand years ago, all of the World-level geniuses of the Twelve Palaces who were acknowledged by the ancient pagodas were ordered to return, then challenged the Daolord Cloudworld. After that, Swordlord Darknorth, Prince Greatjoy, Heartlord Solewind, and Waterlord Firesurge all suddenly disappeared. I heard that they had all gained an incredible stroke of good fortune. Prince Greatjoy, Heartlord Solewind, and the others all returned together tens of thousands of years ago, as did Flamefairy Su Youji. I thought that Swordlord Darknorth must’ve died.”

The black-armored Daolords all chatted amongst themselves, while the ones closer to Ning all called out in very modest manners, “Swordlord Darknorth.”

Virtually all of the black-armored Daolords had reached that level through using Pseudo Samsara Pills. It was all but guaranteed that they would forever remain Daolords of the First Step. They thus didn’t spend much time or effort on cultivation, and instead were filled with curiosity about the latest news and goings ons.

When the almighty Hegemon had chosen Ning and the others, they were quickly able to deduce what was really happening. In truth, the Hegemon didn’t really care that they knew some of the details; so long as the secret of the alternate universe was kept hidden, that was enough.

“Come on.” Lord Woodflower led Ning towards an ancient pagoda. “Su

Youji, you can wait outside.”

“Understood.” Su Youji obediently stood outside the pagoda, while Ji Ning entered.

The interior of the pagoda was simple and unadorned. Deep within it, atop a stone dais, there were a series of heartlamps that were lit. Heartlamps looked quite similar to lotus flowers in shape, and they contained sparks of truesoul flames. So long as the master remained alive, these flames would never die.

There were five levels to the stone dais. There were many heartlamps on the first level, well over two thousand. The second level had far fewer lamps, just sixteen in total. The third level only had eighty-two heartlamps, the fourth level had merely thirty-five heartlamps, and the fifth level only had two heartlamps.

“This stone dais has five levels. The first level is for Daolords of the First Step, the second is for Daolords of the Second Step, and so on and so forth. The fifth level is reserved for Eternal Emperors.” Lord Woodflower looked at the two heartlamps on the fifth level, then let out a sigh. “Our Sword Palace has only given birth to a total of three Eternal Emperors. One has perished, while the other two are out adventuring...”

Ning nodded. The Sword Palace only had around a hundred ‘real’ Daolords. The reason why there were so many on the first level, with over two thousand heartlamps present, was because almost all of them were black-armored Daolords.

“Senior apprentice-brother, our Sword Palace actually has thirty-five Daolords of the Fourth Step?” Ning asked. The fourth step represented Verge-level Daolords; they definitely would be considered incredibly strong major powers.

“Think about Daolord Everstarter, who has been missing for countless chaos cycles. Do you think he is alive, or do you think he is dead?” Lord Woodflower looked at Ning. “The heartlamp remains lit because it cannot sense him, but whether or not he is actually still alive is hard to say.”

Ning nodded. For example, if he had died in an alternate universe, there

would've been no way to sense it.

"As for Daolords of the Fourth Step who we are certain are still alive, there are twenty-two of them," Lord Woodflower said. "The others, we simply cannot tell. Daolords of the Fourth Step are all searching for opportunities and fortunes that will assist them in their Daomerge. For the sake of their Daomerge, they will risk their lives and plunge into some truly deadly regions... and some of them will never return."

Ning couldn't help but sigh as well. Daolord Solesky was another example; for the sake of his Daomerge, he had chosen to brave the dangers of the Waveshift world.

"Alright. Come, set a heartlamp alight," Lord Woodflower said. "The normal rule is that only Daolords can leave. However, you are capable of becoming a Daolord whenever you choose, and so we won't force things. For now, we'll temporarily keep your heartlamp on the first level."

A dark, gloomy lotus-shaped heartlamp hovered before Ning. Ning stretched out a finger, sending out a stream of his soul into the heartlamp. Poof! The wick within the flower petals of the heartlamp instantly lit up. Ning could sense the strong connection which now existed between his truesoul and the blazing flames. It almost felt like one of his clones.

With but a thought, Ning sent the heartlamp flying to the borders of the first level of the stone dais, then set it down.

"After you become a Daolord, training will speed up significantly at first. It shouldn't take you too long to reach the second step! Reaching the third step will take a bit more time, while reaching the fourth step will be the most difficult of all." Lord Woodflower had a complicated look on his face as he said softly, "As for the Daomerge... it'll be up to luck."

Countless monstrously powerful Daolords had perished. Only a minuscule number became Eternal Emperors.

"However... failing in the Daomerge doesn't mean that much. To be able to roam the universe freely for 108,000 chaos cycles is enough." Lord Woodflower laughed. "If you stifle yourself and choose a weak Dao... even if you are lucky enough to become an Eternal Emperor, you'll live in

perpetual fear of being killed by one of the powerful Daolords. Even if you live forever, that just means you'll be pitiful bug forever!"

Ning stared at the ancient, dispirited Lord Woodflower. Suddenly, he could sense a terrifying sword-intent emanate from the man's body. Ning couldn't help but nod.

To mortals, cultivators seemed to have unlimited lifespans; upon becoming a Celestial Immortal, it was said that your lifespan would be as long as that of the heavens themselves. However, in reality there was still a limit! Even entire chaosworlds and the heavens within them would eventually perish and be born anew. As for World-level cultivators and Daolords, they could at most live for 108,000 chaos cycles! They had to succeed in the Daomerge within this allotted time span.

If they did not complete their Daomerge, then when the time came they would perish. Thus... even the most powerful of Daolords could only live for 108,000 chaos cycles. This was why the Sword Palace had more than 80,000 powerful Daolords in its records, but only a hundred who were still alive.

Only by succeeding in the Daomerge would they gain true eternity. For the most powerful, such as the Hegemon, time flowed on in an endless stream but they remained at the very apex of the universe. The almighty Brightshore Hegemon had been alive for far longer than even the Twelve Palaces.

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With the heartlamp lit, Ning left the pagoda.

Su Youji was waiting for him outside. There was actually a green-robed creature with hundreds of tentacles that served as hair and a pair of golden eyes.

"Greetings, Master." The green-robed creature immediately knelt down and called out with respect when he saw Ning emerge.

"And you are...?" Ning was puzzled.

"This is your servant," Lord Woodflower said. "A servant which the

Brightshore Kingdom has prepared for you.”

“The Brightshore Kingdom is giving me a servant? A World-level servant?” Ning was puzzled. What was the point of giving him a World-level servant?

Lord Woodflower said, “Don’t underestimate his usefulness. He will be extremely important to you! Normally, only real Daolords of the Twelve Palaces will be given access to servants like him. Those black-armored Daolords never will. Every one of them is raised here within the Brightshore Kingdom and possesses both self-cloning abilities as well as incredibly powerful souls. Just one of his clones will accompany you, with another one remaining in the Brightshore Kingdom.”

“Senior apprentice-brother, are you saying...?” Ning was starting to understand.

“Exactly so. He’ll be used to send messages.” Lord Woodflower looked at Ning. “If you run into trouble and need to ask for rescue, you can tell him and his clone in the Brightshore Kingdom will be able to immediately report it to us! The Brightshore Kingdom will immediately spread the word to all of the Daolords and Eternal Emperors of the kingdom who are in the Endless Territories. The ones closest to you will head to you as quickly as possible!” Lord Woodflower laughed.

Ning’s eyes lit up. Absolutely incredible. To use a messenger relay of clones to ensure that the Daolords and Eternal Emperors of the Brightshore Kingdom were in constant contact was an effective way of maintaining communication.

“However, given how truly vast the Endless Territories are, generally speaking it would be difficult for an ordinary World God’s clone to be able to sense past a thousand or so territories. Thus, the Brightshore Kingdom has arranged for this one to work with you. His soul is incredibly powerful,” Lord Woodflower said.

Ning nodded in understanding. There was a limit to the distance at which a clone would be able to sense the presence of another clone. Elder God and Ancestral Immortal clones could only sense each other up to ten

territories apart, whereas World-level clones would only function up to a thousand territories apart.

The so-called ‘sensing’ method was actually a type of soul resonance. Thus, the stronger the soul, the greater the distance at which the connection could be maintained! Take Ning as an example. Although he was merely at the World level, his soul was comparable to a Daolord’s! As for these World-level cultivators who had been trained by the Brightshore Kingdom, they all had clones and souls which were far more powerful than that of ordinary World-level cultivators, allowing them to sense at a great distance as well.

“It is quite rare for World-level cultivators to have clones.” Ning sighed with emotion. “Ones with such powerful souls are even more rare.”

“The Brightshore Kingdom doesn’t have that many Daolords. That’s why we can afford to do this,” Lord Woodflower said. “There’s no way the Dao Alliance, for example, could do such a thing. Still, they have methods of their own... but of course, those methods are far slower than ours.”

Ning nodded. The Brightshore Kingdom was able to transmit information at truly shocking speeds.

“When you wander through the outside world, the Brightshore Kingdom shall be the strongest shield available to you.” Lord Woodflower smiled at Ning. “And all of the Daolords of the Brightshore Kingdom have sworn oaths from the day they joined to never engage in battle against each other.”

Ning chuckled. When he had received the Sword Palace’s medallion, he had also sworn a lifeblood oath. No members of any of the Twelve Palaces could kill each other.

“The major powers of the Brightshore Kingdom are extremely unified when wandering the outside world. If you encounter other Daolords of the Brightshore Kingdom who are in danger, you should help them as well.” Lord Woodflower looked at Ning.

“Understood.” Ning nodded.

"Right. This is the star map of all territories which are known to the Brightshore Kingdom." Lord Woodflower handed a rolled-up golden star map scroll to Ning.

Ning accepted it. Upon opening it, a look of shock instantly filled his face.

"Amazed, right? The Endless Territories are truly vast, and some of its danger zones are also truly massive. Many cannot even be fully mapped out." Lord Woodflower let out a sigh.

Ning stared, stunned, at the star map. Good heavens. This... this was far larger than the entire star map of the alternate universe!

Chapter 3: The Journey

The territories occupied by cultivators in the Endless Territories roughly made up around sixty to seventy percent the size of the alternate universe. However, there were many ‘danger zones’.

For example, the region marked down as the ‘Terror Starsea’ was considered the most dangerous location in all the Endless Territories. It had yet to be fully mapped out, but its known area alone already surpassed the entirety of the rest of the Endless Territories. It was incredibly dangerous, and less than one in ten thousand Daolords would survive a trip into it! Generally speaking, only incredibly powerful Daolords would be lucky enough to survive, and even the majority of Eternal Emperors who entered that place would perish.

The Terror Starsea, in and of itself, was nearly comparable to the entire alternate universe in size. It was without a doubt the most dangerous place in the Endless Territories. The Endless Territories also had some other similar danger zones which were quite terrifying. Chances of entering and surviving were very slim.

“If we factor in those danger zones, the Endless Territories is far larger than the alternate universe.” Ji Ning was rather stunned as he carefully read through the information the star map contained regarding the Endless Territories.

“Is that...” Ning’s eyes narrowed as he saw an explanation of the six major forces within the Endless Territories.

The Dao Alliance was comprised of virtually all cultivators. It was an enormous behemoth that was also far-flung and dispersed. It had the most Daolords and Eternal Emperors, but it also had so many internecine disputes and took up so much territory that it had always operated under the principle of non-governance.

The Brightshore Kingdom was created by the almighty Hegemon Brightshore, one of the three mighty Hegemons of the Endless Territories!

The Aeonians consumed cultivators, using them as food. They were

extremely unified and were incredibly powerful after being Awakened.

The ‘Aberrants’. They were the hundreds and thousands of strange, unique creatures who had been birthed by the primordial chaos. After Hegemon Windrain rose to power and established the Windrain Kingdom, it became a holy land for all Aberrants and countless Aberrants congregated there.

The Ancient cultivators comprised the most mysterious, secretive organization in all the Endless Territories. They were extremely few in number, but each and every one of them possessed incredible power. Their divine abilities and secret arts were powerful beyond measure, and they were led by Hegemon Netherlily.

The Dark Kingdom was comprised of cultivators who had migrated from outside the Endless Territories, and they ruled over the border territories.

“Much more complex than the alternate universe,” Ning mused to himself.

“Junior apprentice-brother.” Lord Woodflower smiled as he looked at Ning. “Surprised?”

“I never realized our many danger zones our Endless Territories possess, or that we actually have six major forces here,” Ning said.

“There’s no need for most World-level cultivators to know such things. The Endless Territories are simply too vast and filled with so many dangers that they would never make it far enough to find out,” Lord Woodflower said. “You, however, are different. This is all information you’ll need to know after you become a Daolord.”

Ning nodded.

“As for the danger zones... some are almost infinitely large, especially the Terror Starsea. Not even the almighty Hegemon has been able to fully explore them,” Lord Woodflower said. “Honestly, the main things you need to keep in mind are those six major powers. The Brightshore Kingdom is rather aloof, and we are on fairly good terms with the Dao Alliance, the Aeonians, and the Aberrants. We can be considered enemies of the Dark

Kingdom, as they are foreigners, after all. But remember... we are mortal foes of the Ancient cultivators!"

"Mortal foes?" Ning was startled.

"Right." Lord Woodflower nodded somberly. "Thus, you need to be wary of them! But of course, you need to keep an eye out for the other organizations as well. The Dao Alliance, for example. It is so large and filled with so much internal struggles that it wouldn't surprise me if some of their major powers suddenly assaulted you. Same with the Aeonians; you are a cultivator, after all! Aeonians love eating Samsara Daolord cultivators."

"Alright. You know everything you need to know." Lord Woodflower looked at Ning. "In short... have a safe trip."

"Alright." Ning nodded heavily.

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After accepting the servant, Ning led Su Youji in leaving the Sword Palace.

The Brightshore Kingdom was quite similar to the Trileaf Realm, in that it also had three spacetime tunnels.

"These three spacetime tunnels lead to three different parts of the Endless Territories, allowing our cultivators to waste as little time as possible when travelling." A black-lord Daolord guard who stood outside the tunnel smiled as he explained to Ning.

"Mm." Ning led Su Youji straight into the spacetime tunnel. In his heart, he couldn't help but muse that the Paragon of Pills and Hegemon Brightshore apparently were quite similar in their mastery over spacetime.

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The Badlands Territory and Vastheaven Palace had originally seemed quite distant from one another, but if you looked at the star map of the Endless Territories you would realize that they actually belonged to the same general neighborhood! Given Ning's strength, a few hundred years

would suffice for his clone to go from the Badlands Territory to Vastheaven Palace.

“We should be able to make it in around three or so centuries.” Ning’s true body would be able to move even faster; the spacetime tunnel would save him quite some time.

Swoosh.

A flying shuttle was hurtling through the void, with Ning, Su Youji, and World God Pillsaint within it.

“Master, what sort of a place is Vastheaven Palace?” Pillsaint asked curiously.

“A place I have to go. In fact, I’m technically a member of Vastheaven Palace as well,” Ning said with a smile. Indeed. He had to reach that place before he could fulfill his lifeblood oath and return to the Three Realms. His Primaltwin had been protecting the Three Realms for quite some time now, but it had to remain physically outside within the primordial chaos just beyond it, unable to actually re-enter.

“Youji, Pillsaint, both of you have made tremendous gains. I imagine both of you can become Daolords now,” Ning said.

“Yes.” Su Youji nodded. “After I received the legacy of Feixian the Exalted but prior to visiting the Genesis Lands, I was already comparable to a supreme Chaos Immortal. Thanks to the opportunities the Genesis Lands gave me... even if I don’t use any treasures at all, I am a transcendent Chaos Immortal.”

Ning nodded. To reach that level only through the usage of Eternal weapons wasn’t that impressive. If you were able to reach a transcendent level of power without needing to rely on magic treasures, you would probably be able to break through to the Daolord level whenever you wished.

“Thank you, Master, for that Archaeus medallion. Otherwise, I have no idea how long it would take for me to break through.” Su Youji felt rather excited. She had never imagined that she would become a Daolord as well.

"I have to thank you as well, Master. If it wasn't for you, I can't even imagine how long it would take before my Dao of Alchemy would have reached its current level." Pillsaint was quite excited. "Flamefairy, I can become a Daolord whenever I wish as well."

Ning laughed. His two most worthy retainers were both able to become Daolords. This was truly pleasing to him.

"Right. Have Solewind, Greatjoy, and the others made their breakthroughs yet?" Ning asked.

"Ah! I was so happy to see you back that I forgot to tell you," Su Youji said. "Prince Greatjoy broke through to become a Daolord roughly three thousand years after our return! Just two years after that, Waterlord Firesurge became a Daolord as well! Another twelve thousand years after that, Solewind also became a Daolord."

Ning was startled. All of them became Daolords?

"Makes sense. They had reached their bottlenecks long ago; the only reason they held back was because they had made some gains in the Genesis Lands. Any further improvements would be incredibly difficult. I'm not surprised they broke through to become Daolords," Ning said.

"Master, when will you become a Daolord?" Su Youji asked curiously.

"Right!" Pillsaint was curious as well.

"It won't take too long," Ning said. No matter what, he had to reunite with his clone first. In addition... he could also dimly sense that there was still a slight flaw with his Sword Dao. He had the feeling that he was close to breaking through, but just needed one final stimulus.

"Since the two of you are both ready to become Daolords... how about this. Let's find a quiet, secluded place and have you two break through there," Ning said. "Or would you prefer to train for a bit longer and further solidify your foundations?"

"I solidified my foundation long ago. I was just waiting for you to come back, Master. I can break through whenever I wish; there's no need to wait any further." The Flamefairy smiled.

"I solidified my foundation back in the Trileaf Realm. I've been waiting to make my breakthrough," Pillsaint said. After acquiring the first six chapters of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters], he had spent roughly a million years in accelerated time training. That was how long it had taken for Ning to acquire these six lifeblood weapons.

"If that's the case... hm. Let's just go over there." Ning willed it, and the flying ship quickly shifted into a different dimensional continuum, then landed on a quiet, desolate chaos planet. This chaos planet had no life on it at all, and its surface was a rocky one.

Ning waved his hand, causing an Immortal estate to descend upon the surface of this planet. With another thought, Ning activated the various layers of restrictive seals and spells on the estate, causing an aura of enormous yet subdued power to cover the entire planet. Anyone off in the distance would never be able to detect any hint of an aura from this chaos planet.

Breaking through to become a Daolord would cause an enormous disturbance. They had to do their best to dampen their auras and prevent themselves from being discovered, which would cause unnecessary trouble.

"Make your breakthroughs here. I'll stand guard for you," Ning said.

"Yes, Master." Both Pillsaint and Su Youji were rather excited and nervous. Although they were confident in their chances, breaking through to become a Daolord was an incredibly important event in the life of any cultivator.

Chapter 4: The Brothers of Vastheaven Palace

Ji Ning stood before the railings of the Immortal estate on this chaos planet, staring off into the starry void.

Boom!

Suddenly, a roiling aura of power rocketed into the skies, an aura which was powerful, vast, and utterly exalted. This was not an aura which a World-level cultivator could produce. Even for Ning, only the azureflower mist energy in his body could compare to this aura in power.

“A Daolord’s aura.” Ning smiled. “Pillsaint was the first to break through.”

Breaking through from the World level to become a Daolord required the complete rebuilding of the body, which meant that there was naturally no way to keep one’s aura hidden during the process. It would erupt with abandon. But of course, Ning had long ago set wards on this planet to prevent the Daolord ripples from spreading out.

Rumble...

A dense whirlpool of chaos energy began to form in the void above the planet. The enormous vortex of chaos energy centered around the planet, gathering in large amounts of chaos energy and then continuously transmitting it directly into Pillsaint and letting him make use of it.

A short while later, yet another Daolord aura erupted towards the heavens as the Flamefairy began to make her breakthrough as well. Soon, yet another vortex of chaos energy began to fill the void outside the world.

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The enormous chaos vortexes swirled around this chaos planet. As for Ning, he just quietly stood guard in front of the estate. A disruption in the flow of chaos energy alone generally wouldn’t attract the attention of major powers, because True Gods, True Immortals, Elder Gods, and

Ancestral Immortals would cause similar phenomena when they made their breakthroughs. As a result, fluctuations in the flow of chaos energy was fairly common, and the ripples were also quite weak from a distance.

The breakthrough process took more than an entire day.

Swoosh. A chubby form suddenly rocketed into the skies, then landed before Ning. It was the chubby-face, white-teethed Pillsaint. Pillsaint's aura was now more natural but also more majestic. Just judging from auras alone, one would believe that he was significantly more powerful than Ning. He had already reached the Daolord level.

"Congratulations, Daolord Pillsaint." Ning smiled.

"I must thank you, Master. If it wasn't for you, I truly do not know how long it would've taken for me to become a Daolord. Or perhaps I might've never reached this level." Pillsaint was rather moved as well. He was far more talented in alchemy than he was in combat, but to become a true grandmaster alchemist was incredibly difficult. This time, thanks to Ning, he had been lucky enough to attract the attention of the Paragon of Pills in the alternate universe and be bestowed with her techniques, allowing him to find his own path.

The Paragon of Pills had given him the first six chapters, which could guide one directly to becoming an Eternal Emperor. Not even the Brightshore Kingdom had a comparable alchemical technique.

Only after being guided by an eminent master did Pillsaint know what path he should take. Without an eminent master, only a man of utterly dazzling talent, such as Ji Ning, Solewind, and the others, would be able to rely on his own thoughts and ideas to enter the Daolord level. But of course, this would still be much easier if you had many other legacies and techniques to learn from. If you were able to benefit from the wisdom and experience of your predecessors, you would be able to avoid some of their mistakes. If you wished to see far, you had to stand on the shoulders of giants.

Swoosh. Moments later, yet another figured flew into the heavens, her form ephemeral and bewitchingly beautiful. Dressed in fiery red robes, it

was indeed Su Youji, and her beauty and aura of seduction was only even more intoxicating than before.

As someone who trained in the Dao of Charm and control, Su Youji's natural grace and charm was becoming increasingly amazing. A single glance from her would be enough to drive most World-level cultivators insane with love, causing them to be willing to sacrifice themselves for her.

"Master." Su Youji smiled as she looked at Ning, but she felt a bit disappointed when she saw how Ning's eyes still remained very calm and tranquil. She said with a hint of resignation, "I thought I'd be able to affect you a little bit. It seems your ability to resist mesmerization is extraordinarily powerful. As expected, given that you were able to go through the primessence chains."

"If you used your secret arts, I might be affected," Ning said with a laugh.

"I would never do that to you," Su Youji said.

In truth, Ning wasn't sure if he would be able to withstand her. She was now a Daolord, after all. If she used her mesmerization secret arts with her Daolord-level energy... she might not be able to take control over him, but it was likely that she would be able to affect him. She wasn't an ordinary Daolord, after all; she had trained in the legacy of Feixian the Exalted, a terrifyingly powerful Daolord. But of course, even if she was able to affect Ning, Ning would be able to summon his quadressence lightning and water with a thought, using them to easily extinguish Su Youji. The main problem was that the difference in power between them remained too vast!

The Dao of Charm was not a Dao suited to close combat; it was meant to control and beguile foes.

"Now that you are Daolords, everything has changed for you," Ning said. "With each step they take, Samsara Daolords walk between life and death. You have only taken the first step on your path! In the future, you must be even more careful and meticulous in your cultivation. I won't make any unreasonable requests of you, but I do expect the two of you to at least

survive to reach the fourth step.”

“Right.” Pillsaint nodded.

“Failing in the Daomerge is one thing, but if I was to fail and die when breaking through to the second, third, or fourth steps... that would be a joke!” Su Youji was quite confident as well.

For Samsara Daolords, every single step they took was akin to groping for a path through the darkness!

Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals, as well as World-level cultivators, would be able to sense the prime essences of the universe. The prime essence of the Dao of the Sword, for example, would emanate an aura with extremely detailed information regarding the Dao which would allow cultivators to safely train all the way up to the master-class as a World-level cultivator.

After that... you would be searching through the darkness. A single misplaced step would result in death.

The Daomerge at the end would prove to be the greatest trial. If your Dao held even the slightest of imperfections, there was no way it could gain true eternity. The only result would be you dying and your Dao vanishing. Not even the likes of Su Youji, Pillsaint, or Ning were confident in being able to succeed in the Daomerge. Their goal was to first do their best to become Daolords of the Fourth Step. If they couldn’t even reach that level, they really would become the laughingstocks of the Brightshore Kingdom.

As for the Daomerge? They’d worry about that after actually reaching the fourth step.

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Now that Su Youji and Pillsaint were Daolords, the journey before the trio would be even smoother sailing than before. Daolords were naturally a powerful deterrent to any would-be attackers, allowing them to easily travel for nearly three centuries in complete peace.

Slumberlake Star was a place with a spacetime transfer array.

Whoosh. The array suddenly lit up.

"The array was activated just a short while ago. Why is it being activated again so soon?" The Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals who were responsible for overseeing this spacetime transfer array were all puzzled and mumbled to each other.

A short while later, three figures suddenly emerged from the spacetime transfer array. The trio consisted of Ji Ning, Pillsaint, and Su Youji.

When the three of them appeared and the Daolord auras of the latter two wafted outwards, the Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals were so terrified that they didn't dare say another word.

By now, there was no way Ning would choose to waste time in order to save a bit of travel expenses. They naturally chose to independently activate the arrays each time!

"We're fairly close to Vastheaven Palace by now. We should arrive in about half a year," Ning said with a laugh.

"Congratulations, Master." Su Youji smiled. "You've been waiting far too long for this day."

"Yes. It has been far too long." Ning nodded slowly. The reason he cared so much about going to Vastheaven Palace... was because he truly missed his mother and father.

Swoosh!

A flying vessel appeared out of nowhere. Ning and the others entered the vessel, which then speedily departed. They needed to fly for roughly half a month, then go through a natural spatial vortex to reach a more distant location. This was how travelling through the primordial chaos was. In truth, very little of the time was spent going through spacetime transfer arrays; the vast majority of the time was spent going through some rather problematic locations.

Rumble...

There was a chaos planet located within a region of primordial chaos

that was fairly close to Slumberlake Star. A fierce fight was going on upon the surface of the planet, causing quite a significant disturbance.

“Eh?” Ning suddenly had a strange feeling. At his level of power, these feelings were generally quite accurate. “Stop!” Ning immediately brought his flying vessel to a halt and put it away.

“Master?” Pillsaint and Su Youji were both puzzled. Why had they suddenly come to a halt?

“Let’s take a look up ahead,” Ning said. “A battle seems to be occurring upon that chaos planet.”

Pillsaint and Su Youji were both puzzled. A battle? So what? What was the point of watching? Still, neither would go against Ning’s wishes. They immediately followed Ning in flying over.

Three World-level cultivators and a number of Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals were watching this battle from afar. This place was fairly close to Slumberlake Star, a spacetime transfer array, and so quite a few cultivators had come over to watch.

“Gentlemen, what is happening on that planet?” Ning walked over to them.

The watching cultivators all turned their heads, puzzled, towards Ning’s group. They saw the white-robed youth, then saw the two figures behind him.

Daolords?!?!

“Greetings, Daolords.” The three World-level cultivators were badly shocked. They hastily bowed.

“Daolords.” The Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals were quivering with fear.

Ning instructed, “Tell me about the battle going on upon that chaos planet.” For him to feel an affinity for it meant there had to be some sort of a connection to himself.

One of the World-level cultivators, an elderly man, immediately said,

“Right away, senior.” He didn’t dare act negligently towards this white-robed youth. The youth looked like a World-level cultivator, but the two Daolords were standing behind him. Clearly, this youth’s background was extraordinary.

“That planet has a total of six World-level cultivators who are split up into two groups,” the old man said.

“I can tell that there are two sides.” Ning frowned. He was able to see from ten billion kilometers away that atop that chaos planet, there was a single World-level cultivator who was being assaulted by five others. He was just barely able to hold his own.

“On one side is the Clearwind Temple. The five of them are working together to kill a common foe, a World-level cultivator of their mortal enemy, ‘Vastheaven Palace’.” The old man hurriedly sped up his explanation.

Ning’s face tightened. Vastheaven Palace? No wonder he sensed a connection!

“Hmph.” Ning took a step forward, transforming into a streak of sword-light that tore through space. Through the Blood Drop evasion skill, he entered a different dimensional continuum as he charged towards that chaos planet at maximum speed. If one of the brothers of Vastheaven Palace ended up being bullied by others before his very eyes, what a joke that would be!

“Senior, t-that’s Clearwind Temple!” The old man cried out in alarm. He could sense the killing intent radiating off Ning. Clearwind Temple was a force every bit the equal of Vastheaven Palace. For World-level cultivators, such organizations were unfathomably vast and powerful.

“Master!” Su Youji transformed into a streak of light as well. The nearby cultivators were all dazed when they heard her address him as ‘Master’. What was going on? Why would a Daolord address a World-level cultivator as ‘master’?

“So what if they belong to Clearwind Temple? Our master belongs to Vastheaven Palace!” Pillsaint emanated a killing aura as well as he too

transformed into a streak of light.

The old man and the nearby World-level cultivators, Elder Gods, and Ancestral Immortals were all completely stunned.

Chapter 5: Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace

By the time Ji Ning emerged from the different dimensional continuum, he had already emerged directly outside that chaos planet.

The five World-level cultivators of Clearwind Temple who were surrounding and attacking that lone figure on the surface of the chaos planet immediately noticed the intruder. Their leader, a muscular and tall World-level cultivator, immediately barked out, “Clearwind Temple is in pursuit of a thief. Fellow Daoist, leave immediately!”

“Hmph.” Ning let out a cold snort, immediately transforming into a streak of sword-light. He moved at four times the speed of light as he charged over at maximum speed.

As soon as Ning began to move, the World-level cultivators on the chaos planet were all shocked. Four times the speed of light? It must be understood that most World-level cultivators weren’t even able to move at twice the speed of light, unless they specialized in certain speed-based secret arts. Daolords of the First Step could generally move at double the speed of light, Daolords of the Second Step could move at triple the speed of light, Daolords of the Third Step could move at quadruple the speed of light, and Daolords of the Fourth Step could move at quintuple the speed of light.

Of course, this was just the ‘normal’ speed. If you were skilled in evasive techniques or had a good evasion-type treasure, things would be completely different. Both, however, were extremely rare.

“How can a World-level cultivator move that fast? He must specialize in a movement art.” The five World-level cultivators of Clearwind Temple immediately came to this conclusion.

“I am Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace!” Ning’s cold, baleful voice instantly rang out within the air above the chaos planet, and it struck against the hearts of those five World-level cultivators like thunder,

causing their faces to turn pale.

Vastheaven Palace? Not good!

“Is that brother Darknorth?” The belabored and surrounded azure-robed figure immediately called out loudly, “Careful, brother Darknorth! The five of them are not easy to deal with.” He had heard of Darknorth before. Daolord Solesky’s incarnation in Vastheaven Palace had told everyone of Darknorth, letting them know that they had gained a new brother whose name was Darknorth and who was just an Elder God.

“According to what big brother Solesky said, Darknorth is just an Elder God. But that doesn’t seem to be right,” the azure-robed man mused to himself.

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“Stop him!”

“He belongs to Vastheaven Palace? Capture him as well and imprison them both into Blackwind Prison!”

“Attack!”

The five cultivators of Clearwind Temple, upon realizing that Ning was from Vastheaven Palace, immediately launched their attacks against him as well. Two of them continued their assaults on the azure-robed figure while the other three began to charge towards Ning.

“Hmph.” Ning flew forwards like a streak of sword-light, not even drawing his black swords. He just gave them a cold look.

Boom!

It was as though the heavens themselves were collapsing! A terrifying, awesome sword-intent suddenly appeared on the surface of the chaos planet, crystallizing into streaks of sword-light. Countless streaks of sword-light descended upon the world as the five World-level cultivators stared upwards in terror. In the face of this boundless rain of sword-intent, the five were like nothing more than ants.

“How can he be this strong?”

“Impossible.”

“This sword-intent...” The five World-level cultivators were completely stunned. For the sword-intent alone to be this strong... this man could wipe them out as easily as if they were ants. Utterly terrified, the five all produced white jade seals in their hands, then crushed them to beg for rescue. They didn’t even think about fighting back; all they wanted to do was beg for aid.

Whoosh. The endless sword-intent crashed upon them like a wave, smothering and drowning all five of the World-level cultivators. The sword-intent was as soft as cotton, quickly wrapping around all five World-level cultivators. Ning then took out a gourd and opened it, allowing its opening to exert a tremendous sucking power. Swoosh! All five cultivators were instantly drawn inside.

With but a thought, Ning dismissed the sword-intent from the skies.

As far as Ning was concerned, these five World-level cultivators truly were like ants. The difference in power between him and them was simply enormous. Ning, however, didn’t wish to be rash. He’d first capture them, then decide later whether or not to kill them.

“Brother Darknorth?” The azure-robed man stared blankly at Ning. He was rather dazed right now.

Big brother Solesky, didn’t you say that brother Darknorth was just an Elder God? For him to have reached the World level was one thing. How did he become this powerful?! He didn’t even have to attack; his sword-intent alone was enough to capture all five of those World-level cultivators. Two of them were supreme World Gods!

“My name is Eastherd.” The azure-robed man suppressed his puzzlement as Ning walked towards him, then said, “Brother Darknorth, thank you for saving my life.”

“Brother Eastherd, I just so happened to move past this area on my way to Vastheaven Palace.” Ning smiled. “What, you’ve heard of me before?”

“I have.” The azure-robed man nodded immediately. “Big brother Solesky

told us about you long ago. He said that you are an Elder God who has close to a World God's level of power, and that you'd be making a breakthrough quite soon. But now... it seems that you have not only reached the World level, you are so powerful as to render me speechless."

Ning chuckled. Indeed. When he met Daolord Solesky, he was just an Elder God.

"Has big brother Solesky returned from the Waveshift world yet?" Ning immediately asked.

"Not yet." Eastherd shook his head and sighed. "He's still trapped in the Waveshift world, with his incarnation standing guard over Vastheaven Palace. His incarnation has mentioned you to us before. Ugh... the Waveshift world is an estate-world left behind by an Eternal Emperor, and Eternal Emperor Waveshift was no ordinary Eternal Emperor at that!"

Ning nodded.

The Waveshift world was one of the many danger zones of the Endless Territories. Quite a few Daolords of the Fourth Step had perished in that place, but a steady stream of them continued to enter it. This was because Emperor Waveshift had left behind certain incredible treasures within that place. Emperor Waveshift was no ordinary Emperor; he was incredibly skilled in the art of Numerancy, to the point of being acclaimed as the number one Numerancy diviner in all the Endless Territories.

Later, he had left to go out adventuring. His estate had become an ownerless item, with generations of Daolords venturing into it to seek out their fortunes. Daolord Badlands was also very skilled in Numerancy. He had even erected his own school within the Waveshift Everworld. There were many other major powers who felt certain that he must've received one of Emperor Waveshift's legacies.

Swoosh. Swoosh.

Two figures flew in from afar. They were Pillsaint and Su Youji. Although they were both Daolords, they were slower than Ning in both teleporting as well as raw flying speed.

“Two Daolords.” Eastherd was badly shocked.

“Master, what happened to those people from Clearwind Temple?” Pillsaint asked.

“Master, you move too fast.” Su Youji laughed.

Ning nodded, then looked at Eastherd. “Eastherd, let’s leave immediately. This place is very close to Clearwind Temple’s territory; it’ll be dangerous for us to stay here too long.”

Eastherd was stunned upon hearing these two Daolords address Ning as ‘master’. Upon hearing Ning’s words, he immediately nodded. “Right, right, right! Let’s hurry up and leave.”

“Let’s go.”

Ning produced his flying vessel, and all four of them immediately boarded it. The vessel quickly disappeared into the skies.

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Aboard the flying vessel.

Eastherd stared at Pillsaint and Su Youji, then looked at Ning.

“Daolords?” Eastherd looked at Ning. “Brother Darknorth, these two Daolords are your retainers?”

“Is that really so surprising? My master can become a Daolord whenever he wishes. Even now, he’s still much more powerful than the two of us,” Pillsaint said.

“You haven’t seen our master’s true power yet,” Su Youji said.

Eastherd was secretly speechless. But it was true; he really had seen nothing at all. Just now, Ning had merely exerted a bit of his sword-intent in order to capture the five foes. That couldn’t even be considered a real attack.

“Brother Eastherd.” Ning immediately asked, “How did you end up in a fight against Clearwind Temple, and on their territory?”

Clearwind Temple was located extremely close to the territory that

battle had just taken place in. Vastheaven Palace, however, was still another eleven territories away. It'd still take them another half year to reach it.

Half a year wasn't a long period of time, given how long most cultivators lived for, but it wasn't exactly short either. Half a year was enough for you to die countless times in a life-and-death battle.

These two mighty sects were twelve territories away from each other. They had their own territories and nursed old grudges against each other; they could be considered mortal enemies.

"As for this matter, it has to do with one of my disciples." Eastherd shook his head. "Twenty thousand years ago, when I was wandering the outside world, I encountered a young fellow who was incredibly talented and also very kind-hearted. I took him on as my disciple and watched him grow, providing some occasional guidance in secret. Who would've thought that he would end up harvesting a treasure that would attract the attention and pursuit of Clearwind Temple? Of course I had to rescue him! But Clearwind Temple is very close to this place, and many World-level cultivators quickly came to aid their forces. That's why I ended up being surrounded and attacked by five of them at once. If it wasn't for you, brother Darknorth, I probably..."

Ning slowly nodded. "When I captured those five from Clearwind Temple, they all shattered jade talismans. Most likely, they were sending out a distress call."

Chapter 6: Love Will Find a Way

"Right. They had to have been calling for reinforcements." Eastherd's face turned solemn. "Our return to Vastheaven Palace will probably be a difficult one."

"Difficult?" Ji Ning looked at Eastherd.

"What difficulties are there?" Pillsaint asked.

"The feud between Clearwind Temple and our Vastheaven Palace is an old one. Both sides have accumulated countless grievances over the course of many years. You could call us 'mortal enemies', I suppose. They aren't any weaker than us," Eastherd said. "Clearwind Temple has four Daolords, one of which is a Daolord of the Fourth Step. Two are at the third step, while one is a Daolord of the First Step who only broke through thanks to a Pseudo Samsara Pill. Just now, when you attacked, those five World-level cultivators all shattered their jade medallions to send out distress calls. When Clearwind Temple notices so many of its cultivators sending out distress signals simultaneously, they'll send at least a Daolord of the Third Step. They might even send out their Daolord of the Fourth Step, Patriarch Clearwind himself."

"A Daolord of the Fourth Step," Pillsaint murmured softly. The nearby Su Youji looked rather solemn as well.

Ning nodded, then smiled. "No need to worry. Use generals to deal with soldiers, use earth to defend against floods."

He felt quite confident. He had five mighty golems by his side; he truly wasn't worried about most Daolords of the Third Step. In addition, the Brightshore Kingdom's star map was so incredibly detailed that it even included information regarding the Daolords of Clearwind Temple.

Clearwind Temple only had a single member who would pose a threat to Ning. That person was the temple's founder, Patriarch Clearwind. He was extremely formidable, on par with Daolord Solesky! Even amongst Daolords of the Fourth Step, he was extremely formidable.

"If we really are so unlucky as to encounter Patriarch Clearwind, I'll have no choice but to use up one of my Dao-seals," Ning mused to himself. "If that really does end up happening... I'll just chalk it up to helping Vastheaven Palace get rid of a mortal enemy."

The deceased Hegemon's Dao-seals possessed unfathomable power and could easily slay Daolords of the Fourth Step. Alas, Ning only had two such Dao-seals. He wasn't willing to use them unless absolutely necessary. These items couldn't simply be purchased anywhere!

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The flying vessel continued to advance at high speed. Aboard the vessel, Eastherd said with worry, "The Daolords of Clearwind Temple can move much faster than us. It'll take us half a year to reach Vastheaven Palace, but that'll be more than enough time for them to catch up to us."

"Mm." Ning nodded. He was roughly comparable to ordinary Daolords of the Third Step in speed, but if they elected to pursue him they would send Daolords who were skilled in movement techniques or in the manipulation of space.

"Why don't we take a roundabout path?" Ning suggested.

"That's a good idea," Pillsaint said immediately. "Vastheaven Palace isn't that far off anyhow. I'd rather we take a long detour and spend an extra year or two. That way, we can avoid some trouble."

"Right." Eastherd revealed a slightly embarrassed look on his face. "There's... something else I need to disclose."

"Please feel free to say anything," Ning said.

Eastherd waved his hand, causing another figure to appear on the armored deck of the flying vessel. It was a very muscular youth whose skin was tinged with red. Flames were brimming in his eyes, while his head was completely bald. He actually looked like a Fiendgod who had been birthed from flames.

"Master." The youth immediately fell to his knees.

"This gentleman over here is your uncle-master, Darknorth." Eastherd introduced the nearby Ji Ning.

"My respects, Uncle-Master." The youth was extremely respectful.

Eastherd continued, "This is the young disciple I spoke to you about earlier. His name is Sparrow and he's quite talented."

"To become an Elder God within twenty thousand years of cultivation... he is indeed quite talented," Ning praised.

"This disciple of mine offended Clearwind Temple because he sought to harvest a certain treasure to rescue his Dao-companion," Eastherd said.

"Save his Dao-companion?" Ning's heart suddenly shook. He once more glanced at the flame-wreathed youth before him, his gaze much softer than before.

"Just now, he begged me to send him back to his homeland and let him save his Dao-companion." Eastherd looked at Ning rather awkwardly. "But my disciple's homeland is within a territory that's close to Clearwind Temple. It's entirely possible that we'll run into one of their Daolords."

Ning laughed. "Haha, I imagine Clearwind Temple wouldn't expect us to actually dare to double back! And, based on what I understand, none of those four are skilled in Numerancy. We've already chosen to take a roundabout path; we might as well first pay a visit to young Sparrow's homeland."

"Thank you, uncle-master Darknorth." Sparrow felt tremendously grateful. He actually knew that this request of his was rather excessive. This had started out as a rather minor matter, but things only grew worse and worse, causing the World-level cultivators of both sides to get involved. However, he truly was worried about his Dao-companion. He was afraid that if he took too much time, his Dao-companion's truesoul would disperse.

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A silver flying shuttle gleamed with light as it hurtled through the emptiness of space.

Within this flying shuttle sat a Daolord who was dressed in handsome silver robes. Behind him stood two World-level cultivators who awaited his commands. The rules of Clearwind Temple were actually quite strict.

“Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace?” The silver-robed Daolord sat there, murmuring softly to himself. “Such audacity.”

“This ‘Darknorth’ actually dared to attack within the territory under our control. He really is courting death,” one of the World-level disciples below him said.

“Don’t underestimate him.” The silver-robed Daolord said calmly, “Based on what I saw when I inverted the flows of spacetime, Darknorth was actually able to defeat the five of them with just his sword-intent alone. He even has two Daolords of the First Step as his retainers. He most likely has reached incredible heights in the Dao of the Sword. He may have even mastered a Supreme Dao!”

“But... no matter what, he’s still just a World-level cultivator. When facing me, the only result will be his death.” The silver-robed Daolord was quite confident. He was a Daolord of the Third Step. Not even the likes of Bertulu or Eastcult would be able to match him unless they first broke through to become Daolords of the First Step.

“Given what a high level of enlightenment he has reached, he must have had many strange encounters.” The silver-robed Daolord silently calculated what he should do. “I’ll capture him first. By then, his treasures will be mine.”

.....

Swoosh.

A flying vessel landed atop an ice-locked, ice-covered region. The cultivators who emerged from the vessel where Ji Ning, Pillsaint, Su Youji, Eastherd, and Elder God Sparrow.

“This is one of the dangerous areas in my homeland,” Sparrow said. “This entire region is completely ice-locked, up to a distance of eight hundred million kilometers. Below it is an essence of utter cold. I sent my

Dao-companion deep into that essence, relying on its power to seal her away into ice and ensure that the poison in her body slows its spread."

Ning swept out his godsense, only to discover that there was indeed a cave hidden extremely deep within the ice. Within lay a woman who was sealed in ice.

"Go. Hurry up and save your Dao-companion," Ning said with a laugh.

"Dumb kid, why didn't you just ask me to come save your Dao-companion? Why did you have to take the risk of harvesting the antidote?" Eastherd shook his head.

"I couldn't find you, Master," Sparrow said in a low voice.

Eastherd was speechless. Although he had been occasionally watching his disciple in secret, he had spent the majority of the past twenty thousand years in secluded meditation. As his disciple grew increasingly powerful, Eastherd spent less and less time watching over him.

When Sparrow's Dao-companion had been in danger, Sparrow had wanted to ask his master for assistance. However, he couldn't even locate his master.

"Hurry up and go," Eastherd barked.

"Yes." Sparrow didn't dare to say anything else. He immediately used an evasion skill to delve deep into the icy ground.

Enough time passed for a kettle of tea to be boiled. Two figures suddenly appeared out of nowhere atop the ice, one tall and muscular, the other slender and petite. The tall one was naturally Sparrow, while the slender one was a green-robed woman. The affection and love between the two was clearly quite deep, and it would only grow stronger after sharing this tribulation together.

"Thank you, Master. Thank you, Uncle-Master. Thank you for saving our lives." Sparrow fell to his knees, as did the green-robed woman next to him.

"Hmph." Eastherd accepted the obeisance in a calm manner. He had

nearly died this time, after all.

Ning smiled and nodded, but he had a complicated look in his eyes. These two Dao-companions had been reunited... but how long would it be before him and Yu Wei would be?

Su Youji glanced at Ning, a hint of a blissful smile on her face. "Although the person in Master's heart is not me, at least I'm the only one who follows him and am the one by his side from dawn til dusk. It is enough."

"Because of you, I ended up fighting multiple World-level cultivators of Clearwind Temple. In fact, I'm afraid that even their Daolords might be getting involved now." Eastherd continued, "Sparrow, my disciple, I'm afraid that Clearwind Temple isn't going to just give up on chasing you. They are now chasing after both me and your uncle-master, and they'll probably take revenge upon you as well. But... it's for the best, I suppose. Come with me to Vastheaven Palace. As for your homeland, take what you can with you. The Vastheaven Territory is quite vast indeed."

"Understood." Sparrow and his Dao-companion both understood. That very day, the two of them teleported away some large continents, mountains, and rivers, then joined Ning and Eastherd in leaving this land and heading forth towards Vastheaven Palace.

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In the blink of an eye, more than four years went past since Ning's clash against Clearwind Temple.

A silver shuttle was halted in midair within the emptiness of space.

"Master, if we advance any further we'll be in the Vastheaven Territory." Two of the World-level disciples were rather uneasy.

"Vastheaven Territory." The silver-robed Daolord, Daolord Blesswind, stared off into the distance. Indeed, the territory up ahead was the Vastheaven Territory!

Chapter 7: Blame Your Own Poor Luck

“Master, what should we do? Should we charge into Vastheaven Territory?” The two World-level disciples both looked towards the silver-robed Daolord.

The silver-robed Daolord smiled coldly. “I have two ideas. Listen to them and tell me which one you would choose. The first is for us to enter the Vastheaven Territory, then wait for them at the spacetime transfer array at the Vastheaven Everworld! That way, it doesn’t matter which territory Eastherd and Darknorth travel from; in the end, they still have to go through the array to go to the Vastheaven Everworld.”

The Vastheaven Everworld was Vastheaven Palace’s base.

“If we just wait for them by that spacetime transfer array, we are guaranteed to catch them,” the silver-robed Daolord said. “Vastheaven Palace is some distance away from the spacetime transfer array. Even if we were to be discovered, we’d be able to flee in time.”

The faces of the two World-level disciples turned pale. They were essentially going to enter the enemy base? That was suicide!

“But of course, Daolord Battlemaster of Vastheaven Palace is skilled in Numerancy. If and when he discovers that we are within the Vastheaven Everworld, he’ll begin to plot against us. His plots are quite terrifying.” The silver-robed Daolord continued, “Even if we escape, he’d probably catch us.”

“R-r-right. If Daolord Battlemaster plots against us, we might not be able to escape.”

“Master, entering the Vastheaven Everworld is too risky.” Both of the World-level disciples urged him to reconsider.

“The second method.” The silver-robed Daolord waved his hand, causing a furled star map to appear by his side in the air. The star map slowly opened up, and the silver-robed Daolord stared at it. “No matter what path they take, they still have to return to the Vastheaven Everworld. Although

there are four possible routes back to the Vastheaven Everworld, there's two main nodes which they have to travel past."

"One node is right here, at the dimensional storms which we went past. The other is over here, through this vortex tunnel. If they wish to return to the Vastheaven Everworld, they'll either have to go through either the dimensional storms or pass through this vortex," the silver-robed Daolord said.

His two disciples both nodded. This was how travel through the vast territories worked. There were many areas you could avoid, but some critical junctures were unavoidable. Your only option was to slowly fly through them or possibly teleport through them.

"But there are two possible places. There's no way we can stop them." The two disciples looked at their master.

"So choose one," the silver-robed Daolord said. "The rest is up to luck." He chuckled. "If they are lucky and chose the other route, there's nothing we can do. If they just so happen to choose the place which we are guarding, then we'll be in a position to block their path. Both of these places are fairly far away from Vastheaven Palace. We'll be in a position of much greater security."

The silver-robed Daolord looked at his two disciples. "Shall we go to the Vastheaven Everworld, or shall we go to one of the two nodes on the star map?"

"The nodes."

"Let's choose the nodes."

Both of his disciples immediately chose the nodes.

Even an idiot would know that if they chose the Vastheaven Everworld, they would most likely be forced to wait at the spacetime transfer array for quite some time! Given their master's power as a Daolord of the Third Step, he'd be able to immediately capture Eastherd and Darknorth once they emerged within the formation, then immediately flee. This solution had a high chance of success, true... but it was simply too dangerous to

spend that much time at Vastheaven Palace's base.

"Then we'll choose..." The silver-robed Daolord gently tapped at a point on the unfurled star map. "This place."

The two disciples immediately looked at where he pointed. Their master's finger was tapping against the vortex tunnel.

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Ji Ning's group had taken a very roundabout path, making a journey of half a year become a journey of nearly two years.

"Up ahead is the vortex tunnel." Eastherd was standing at the ship's prow, staring at the emptiness of space before them. He pointed at an enormous, pitch-black vortex off in the distance. "Once we go through the vortex, we'll be able to reach Vastheaven Palace in roughly half a month."

"Almost there." Ning revealed a smile. Vastheaven Palace! He had waited far too long for this day.

On the vessel, Sparrow and his Dao-companion had been behaving in a very low-key manner. There were four others on this flying vessel, after all. One was Sparrow's master, the second was his uncle-master, and the other two were Dalords!

"Disciple." Eastherd looked at Sparrow as he spoke. "There are no generational hierarchies in Vastheaven Palace. We are all brothers, which is why we are very cautious when accepting new brothers into our fold! Formal members are only given a single talisman of welcome, and mine was given to my first disciple long ago. For now, just stay with me within Vastheaven Palace. This can be considered a new, tempering experience for you."

"Yes," Sparrow and his Dao-companion immediately said.

"But of course, the two of you could also beg brother Darknorth for a chance," Eastherd said with a laugh. "Your uncle-master Darknorth is probably going to become a Daolord soon! Once he does, he'll be the fourth Palace Lord of Vastheaven Palace. Our Palace Lords have much more authority than the rest of us; they have the authority to directly

welcome new cultivators into our ranks.”

Sparrow and his Dao-companion both immediately looked at Ning.

Ning chuckled. Once he became a Palace Lord, he’d have a bit more authority, true... but he still couldn’t just randomly accept in new members. They had to be cautious with every new recruit. Otherwise, Vastheaven Palace might end up like some other organizations which were filled with problems and strife. That would be terrible.

“Uncle-master Darknorth...” Sparrow couldn’t help but call out to him.

“This disciple of mind has a kind disp-...” Eastherd spoke out as well.

“I know what type of a person he is.” Ning nodded. Sparrow was indeed a person who deeply valued his relationships. He was willing to risk his own life in order to save his Dao-companion, something which Ning rather admired. Ning nodded. “I’ll handle Sparrow’s entry into Vastheaven Palace.”

“Thank you, uncle-master!” Sparrow immediately expressed his gratitude.

As for his Dao-companion, Eastherd didn’t say anything on her behalf. Recruiting people to join Vastheaven Palace wasn’t something to be done casually.

In truth, Ning was only willing to help out because he approved of Sparrow’s disposition. As for his Dao-companion? For now, Ning didn’t know what she was like. He naturally wouldn’t promise anything rashly.

Rumble...

The flying vessel flew straight into the howling vortex tunnel.

Within the vortex, space flowed like streams of water which the flying vessel advanced through at high speeds. Ning couldn’t help but sigh. The vortex tunnel linking the Three Realms to the Badlands Territory was riddled with dimensional cracks and tears that would appear at random. It was an incredibly unstable vortex tunnel. Even World-level cultivators, if they were unlucky, might be trapped within one of the dimensional tears

and be teleported to a completely unknown location.

This vortex tunnel, however, was an extremely stable one! The vast territories held both stable and unstable vortexes; generally speaking, only the stable ones would be used by cultivators.

“The exit is up ahead.”

The flying vessel spent three days flying through the vortex tunnel. Ning stood at the prow of the vessel, and he was dimly able to see a chaos planet up ahead in the void of space beyond the exit.

Whoosh.

The flying vessel surged out from the vortex tunnel. But right at this moment... boom! It was like it had rammed into some sort of barrier which crackled with dim light.

“Not good.” Ning was in control of the vessel, and his face instantly turned pale.

“Freeze!” A sonorous voice rang out, instantly filling the entire region and causing space itself to be frozen.

A silver flying shuttle flew out from a distant pocket of chaotic space. Ning was able to clearly make out that there was a silver-robed man standing within that silver shuttle. He had a grand, imposing aura and was staring straight at Ning with cold eyes.

“That’s Daolord Blesswind of Clearwind Temple!” Eastherd was shocked.

“Daolord Blesswind?” Pillsaint and Su Youji’s faces tightened a bit as well. The two of them had learned quite a bit about Clearwind Temple on this journey, and they knew Daolord Blesswind to be one of the temple’s Daolords of the Third Step.

“At least it isn’t Patriarch Clearwind.” Ning wasn’t worried at all. The only member of Clearwind Temple who could pose a threat to him was Patriarch Clearwind. But of course, if he appeared Ning would simply have to use up one of his precious Dao-seals to wipe the man out. As for this Daolord Blesswind? No need to use one of the seals at all.

“Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace and Eastherd of Vastheaven Palace, I believe?” A silver-robed man emerged from the distant flying shuttle. He slowly strode through the primordial chaos, his manner grand and imposing. “Darknorth of Vastheaven. You actually have two Daolords of the First Step serving you. Impressive, impressive. But since you’ve chosen to make an enemy out of Clearwind Temple, I’ll have to do what I have to do. I do want to confirm with you, though... are you truly a member of Vastheaven Palace?”

According to Clearwind Temple’s information, there was no one named ‘Darknorth’ amongst the fairly few formal members of Vastheaven Palace. Given that Darknorth had two Daolords of the First Step serving as his retainers, and given that his sword-intent alone was enough to capture five powerful World-level cultivators, he definitely was far too strong to be an irrelevant and nameless figure. Logically speaking, if he was an actual member of Vastheaven Palace, Clearwind Temple would’ve found out about him long ago.

“This is our first time meeting each other. It can be said that we were brought together by karma.” The white-robed Ning just stood there at the prow of his flying vessel, his black scabbard on his back. “I, Darknorth, am indeed a member of Vastheaven Palace. In the future, Clearwind Temple will remember my name well.”

“In the future? I’m afraid you won’t have a future.” The silver-robed Daolord shook his head and sighed. “I just randomly chose a place to wait for you. Who would’ve thought I’d end up actually catching a genius such as yourself? If you have to blame anything, blame your own bad luck.”

“No, no. You are the one with bad luck.” Ning smiled, but his smile was as cold as ice.

Swish.

Ning’s flying vessel instantly charged towards the silver-robed Daolord at high speeds.

Chapter 8: Inside Vastheaven Palace

"Impudence." The silver-robed Daolord laughed coldly. "You really don't know your own limits."

As he spoke, he waved his right hand casually through the void of space. His sleeves instantly began to flutter as a black wind flew out from within it, instantly filling the surrounding area for a million kilometers around then sweeping straight towards Ji Ning's charging vessel.

Aboard the vessel, Su Youji and Pillsaint both had solemn looks on their faces. As for Eastherd, he was panicking. Sparrow and his wife simply watched. Elder Gods weren't even qualified to take part in a battle at this level.

Ning just let out a cold snort. Rumble... lightning and water suddenly surged out of him.

The golden lightning and the jade-green water instantly burst out into the void, and they actually seemed to twine around each other in a complementary manner as they almost instantly transformed into sword-light! Endless amounts of sword-light furiously merged together, coalescing into the Yin-Yang Sword Domain. At his current level, Ning's Yin-Yang Sword Domain was now more brutal, savage, and terrifying than ever before.

A Yin-Yang Sword Domain formed from quadressence lightning and quadressence water was more than enough to annihilate a Daolord of the Second Step.

Although there was a big difference in power between a Daolord of the Second Step and a Daolord of the Third Step, it would still be quite difficult for the latter to slay the former with ease. Daolord Blesswind was skilled in the Dao of Wind, and he was able to easily slay Dalords of the Second Step in close combat. He would not, however, be able to wipe them out from a distance merely by using a few secret arts.

In the end, Daolord Blesswind was nothing more than a Daolord of Clearwind Temple. He simply didn't have any earth-shatteringly powerful

secret arts.

Ning's sword domain of lightning and water was capable of slaying Daolords of the Second Step, but this black tempest was not. When these two surges of power clashed against each other...

Whoooooosh. The dominating sword domain of water and lightning forcibly ripped the black tempest into shreds, then continued to surge towards Daolord Blesswind in a savage manner.

"What?!" Daolord Blesswind's face instantly turned pale. "Impossible. How could my secret art be defeated by a World-level cultivator's secret art?" This was an absolute joke!

"B-but..." The two World-level disciples of Daolord Blesswind were completely stupefied.

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Ning's vessel. Eastherd, Sparrow, and his Dao-companion had been extremely nervous. Now, they were just as stupefied as Daolord Blesswind's disciples. The secret arts of a Daolord of the Third Step had been broken, just like that?

Pillsaint and Su Youji glanced at Ning, their eyes filled with veneration and awe. This was a Daolord of the Third Step! Their own master had actually won in a competition of secret arts against this figure!

"It seems you must've had some truly lucky encounters. Your Dao-seal was quite powerful... but it won't be able to do anything to me." The silver-robed Daolord Blesswind quickly regained his calm. He had immediately decided that Ning must have used a Dao-seal, as he still refused to believe that a World-level cultivator could possess a secret art of such unearthly power.

And in truth, it made sense. This sword-intent domain of lightning and water was a product of many factors. It was created by Daolord Allgod, utilized in accordance with the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] of the Paragon of Pills, and controlled by Ning's powerful azureflower mist energy. This was why it has such tremendous might!

"Then die beneath my blade." Daolord Blesswind suddenly produced an enormous long saber in his hands.

Whoosh! His silver robes fluttered as he instantly charged through the skies, holding the long saber in a double-handed grip. Although Ning's sword domain furiously assaulted him, Daolord Blesswind charged forwards with incredible valor, his divine power flaring outwards and completely resisting the attacks. Clearly, the sword domain wasn't nearly strong enough to deal with Daolords of the Third Step; all it was able to do was have a bit of constrictive power over him. He moved straight through the sword domain, and his icy gaze was filled with a murderous intent.

Upon seeing this, Ning couldn't help but sigh. This Yin-Yang Sword Domain was already his most powerful attack, on a slightly higher level than even his close combat abilities. Alas, he still wasn't able to do anything to his opponent. In the end, he was still just a World-level cultivator, and his attacks weren't enough against a Daolord of the Third Step. He had no choice but to rely on an outside form of assistance.

"Die!" Daolord Blesswind's saber-light flashed like the wind, tearing apart everything in its path as he continued to soar towards the vessel.

Whoosh. Suddenly, a figure appeared out of nowhere in front of the flying vessel. It was a white-haired, icy-eyed man who held an ordinary-looking longsword in his hands.

"Go capture him, swordsman," Ning said.

"Mm." The white-haired man nodded, his face quite calm. He was the strongest of the four golem servants Ning had acquired from Emperor Mirrorsnow's legacy! Ning had chosen to summon him out of an abundance of caution, wishing to have a higher chance of success.

"A golem?" As Daolord Blesswind continued his charge, his gaze fell upon the white-haired man's body. He was able to immediately tell that this was a golem, and a flash of avarice appeared in his eyes. "Not only did he have that incredibly powerful lightning-water Dao-seal, he also has a seemingly strong golem. This World God named Darknorth truly must have had some special experiences. I'll wager he has quite a few treasures

on him. He might even have more than me!"

"Hahaha, golem! You should accept me as your master instead." Daolord Blesswind's aura expanded even further. He refused to believe he would encounter a golem comparable to a Daolord of the Fourth Step, as those were far too valuable. He wasn't worried about this golem at all.

"Hmph." The swordsman charged towards Daolord Blesswind as well.

Rumble...

Space tore apart as Daolord Blesswind and the swordsman golem began an utterly earth-shaking battle, even as Ning's sword domain continuously launched attacks against the Daolord.

The swordsman had the power of a peak Daolord of the Third Step, and he was skilled in both unpredictable attacks and assassination techniques. His technique was completely based off of Emperor Mirrorsnow's [Heartseal] sword-art.

Daolord Blesswind was truly quite formidable in close combat. Although he wasn't exactly a genius, he still had the power of a peak Daolord of the Third Step. He might've been weaker than the swordsman in close combat, making the battle rather difficult, but his secret arts allowed him to hold his own.

"What a powerful golem. How can it be this powerful? I feel as though he's a bit more powerful than even me!" Daolord Blesswind was stunned to discover that the golem actually had the upper hand. "However... he just barely holds an advantage over me. This golem is using up the chaos jewels inside of him. Once his energy is used up, he'll lose."

"Eh?" Ning frowned when he saw this from atop his distant vessel. "The swordsman is already the strongest of my four golems, but he still can't capture Daolord Blesswind? It seems I'll have to have the fisherman and the emperor emerge as well."

But right at this moment, Su Youji suddenly clenched her teeth. She was standing right next to Ning, and her face instantly turned red as a streak of crimson light flickered in her eyes. An invisible ripple of power instantly

surged through the skies and shot towards the distant Daolord Blesswind.

The distant Daolord Blesswind, who was still engaged in a battle against the swordsman, suddenly moved sluggishly for a brief moment, as though he had been distracted for a moment.

Swoosh! The swordsman already held the upper hand. In this moment, his longsword suddenly coiled outwards like a whip, instantly wrapping itself around Daolord Blesswind's body. Daolord Blesswind struggled furiously to break free, but that was no easy feat upon already being bound.

"Come in." The swordsman produced a gourd in his hand, then caused it to emit a powerful attractive force that drew Daolord Blesswind into it.

The swordsman turned his head to glance at Ning, then was drawn back into the estate-world within the Mirrorsnow Painting once more.

"No."

"Master!"

The two World-level disciples in the silver shuttle were completely stunned. They were also completely surrounded by that sword domain of lightning and water. They knew exactly how powerful this sword domain was, and so they didn't dare to fight back at all, allowing Ning to capture them as well.

"We won." A look of completely disbelief was on Eastherd's face.

"T-that was..." Sparrow and his wife were both stunned as well. They felt that this uncle-master was simply far too powerful. He was a World-level cultivator who not only had two Daolord retainers, he had even been able to capture a Daolord of the Third Step. They had never even heard of such power before!

Ning chuckled. "I had to rely on the power of my golem. I myself wouldn't have been able to defeat a Daolord of the Third Step."

"Golems are part of your total power as well," Eastherd said hurriedly.

Ning then glanced at the nearby Flamefairy Su Youji. She gave him a

very smug wink. Eastherd and the others might not have noticed anything, but Ning was in control of the sword domain that covered this entire region; he was able to sense that ripple of invisible power surge outwards.

"Quite impressive," Ning congratulated mentally. "You were able to shake a Daolord of the Third Step."

"Just now, I used the ninth art of Feixian. I'm confident in my abilities to shake Daolords of the Second Step. As for those of the third step, it depends on their mental strength and their heartforce. If I encountered someone formidable in this regard, there would be nothing I could do. From the looks of things, this Daolord Blesswind didn't have a particularly impressive Dao-heart," Su Youji sent back.

Ning couldn't help but sigh. The legacy of Feixian the Exalted truly was incredible. It allowed the user to actually dominate and control those on the same level of power! Even if the target was on a higher level of power, it would still have an effect on that person. But of course, if you encountered someone with a particularly powerful heart, there would be nothing you could do. Heartlord Solewind, for instance, would've been far more impressive against such secret arts than Daolord Blesswind, even when he was merely at the World level.

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After capturing Daolord Blesswind, Ning continued to advance. Half a month later, he arrived at the Vastheaven Everworld.

"That right there is Vastheaven Palace." Eastherd pointed at the peaks of a distant mountain range. One could see a cluster of palaces through the many clouds.

"Vastheaven Palace?" Ning stared at the distant Vastheaven Palace, his breathing rather irregular. Some tears had appeared in his eyes as well. Ever since he had left the Three Realms, he had been hoping he would be able to make it to Vastheaven Palace. And now... he had finally made it! His Primaltwin was finally going to be able to make it back to the Three Realms and search for the souls of his parents within the River of Destiny.

Father. Mother...

In this moment, Ning's mind was not present here in Vastheaven Palace. It was completely focused upon his deceased mother and father.

Chapter 9: Within Vastheaven Palace

Whoosh. Ji Ning's group soared through the void as they flew towards Vastheaven Palace.

"I've already sent a mental message to the other brothers of Vastheaven Palace," Eastherd said.

"Alright." Ning stared towards the direction of the distant palace. As for Pillsaint and Su Youji, both were quite curious as well. What was it like, this place which their master had been planning to go to for so long?

Sparrow and his wife were the most nervous. To them, Vastheaven Palace was absolutely a sacred place.

"Is that..." As they flew closer and closer, Ning realized that there were quite a few figures congregating around the palace gates of Vastheaven Palace. Three of the ones standing at the very front radiated Daolord-level auras.

"Big brother Solesky?" Ning immediately recognized Daolord Solesky, who stood at the very front of the group. "But the aura seems a bit different. Ah, this must be his avatar."

"Ji Ning!" Daolord Solesky laughed heartily, his laughter echoing within the skies.

"Big brother Solesky." Ning was filled with delight as he led Pillsaint and Su Youji to descend towards them.

"Long time no see. And you've already reached the World level!" Daolord Solesky nodded in a satisfied manner as he looked at Ning, then turned his gaze to Pillsaint and Su Youji. The two were standing behind Ning, but there was no way he could ignore their presence. The two were already Dalords, after all!

Daolord Solesky said, "Youji, it's only been a short while since we last met. Who would've thought you'd train even faster than Ji Ning? You've already become a Daolord!"

Daolord Solesky and Su Youji were old friends by now. When he had

taught Ning, he had also provided Su Youji with guidance on occasion.

"It was all thanks to Master's aid that I reached this level," Su Youji said. "And Master has always been stronger than me. Even though I am now a Daolord, I'm still inferior to Master."

"Brother Darknorth truly is formidable," the nearby Eastherd hastily interjected. "I didn't have a chance to let you know, since I just returned, but I was beset upon by five World-level cultivators of Clearwind Temple. Thankfully, brother Darknorth intervened and helped me out, allowing me to escape that predicament. Just by using his sword-intent alone, he was able to easily capture the five of them."

"Clearwind Temple?" A white-robed, blue-haired man standing next to Daolord Solesky suddenly frowned.

"Battlemaster, we can discuss these minor matters later," Solesky interrupted. "The most important thing for us to do today is to formally welcome brother Ji Ning into our ranks."

Ning felt quite moved. Although he hadn't spent much time alongside Solesky, the latter truly had treated him in a sincere manner.

"Ji Ning, it wasn't easy for you to travel all the way here from the Badlands Territory. Back then, Su Youji was an Elder God, but now even she has become a Daolord. I imagine you must have experienced many things," Solesky said.

"Too true." Ning shook his head, rather wistful. "Shortly after I found out that you were trapped in the Waveshift world, I elected to leave the Badlands Territory. Logically speaking, I should've reached Vastheaven Palace a long time ago, but midway through I was suddenly abducted by the almighty Hegemon of the Brightshore Kingdom and taken there."

Ning didn't hide anything. Given how strong he had become, there was no way to hide such information. Take Lord Dawnstar as an example. Anyone in the Endless Territories who was even slightly well-informed knew who he was. Who could possibly be unaware that he was the Palace Lord of the Saber Palace of the Twelve Palaces of Brightshore?

“The Brightshore Kingdom?” Daolord Solesky was completely shocked. The Brightshore Kingdom was one of the six major powers of the Endless Territories, and the almighty Brightshore Hegemon was publicly acknowledged as being the leader of the three Hegemons! For mighty figures such as Verge-level Daolords, the fact that the Brightshore Kingdom would occasionally abduct a few cultivators wasn’t exactly a secret.

“Being abducted by the Brightshore Kingdom can be incredibly dangerous, but... judging from the looks of things, it turned into quite a blessing for you, Ji Ning.” Solesky looked at him.

“Haha. It was indeed. I encountered Pillsaint in the Brightshore Kingdom.” Ning glanced at the nearby Pillsaint.

Pillsaint felt a bit embarrassed. He immediately said, “I, uh, was probably the first person to fight against Master in the Brightshore Kingdom. Unfortunately, he beat me with ease. To be honest, the Flamefairy and I only gained our freedom thanks to Master’s assistance.”

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While Ning and Solesky were chatting, the other brothers of Vastheaven Palace were carefully inspecting this new brother of theirs. When they heard the two Daolords address him as ‘master’, they were quite stunned.

Monsters like this only existed in legends. Who would’ve thought that they’d encounter one in the flesh?

“Brother Ji Ning is incredibly talented, but he’s never had a good master.” Solesky chuckled. “In Brightshore Kingdom, you truly would’ve had the chance to soar into the heavens. Hahaha... I’ve been so busy chatting with you that I forgot to make the introductions. Come, come! This gentleman here is our Daolord Battlemaster, and he is also a Daolord of the Fourth Step.”

Ning turned to look at the long blue-haired man dressed in white robes. The man had a warm smile on his face and an extraordinary demeanor. Ning immediately bowed and said, “Darknorth greets you, big brother Battlemaster.”

A Daolord of the Fourth Step had essentially reached the apex of a certain Dao. After that was the Eternal Emperor level. Daolords of the Fourth Step were never easy to deal with.

"I once tried to use Numerancy to divine your future, brother Darknorth, only to find that everything was clouded and far beyond my abilities to see." Daolord Battlemaster smiled. "Now that I see you have two Daolord retainers, I understand how truly extraordinary you are. If my calculations are correct, these two Daolords should have broken through naturally, rather than relying on Pseudo Samsara Pills."

"They broke through on their own?" The other brothers of Vastheaven Palace were all rather speechless. When they had seen two Daolords of the First Step, they had assumed that both had relied on Pseudo Samsara Pills.

"The stronger Ji Ning is, the better. Vastheaven Palace has gained yet another powerful brother!" Solesky introduced the next person. "This gentleman next to me is our newly ascended Daolord, Daolord Brightfish. He is now a Daolord of the Second Step."

"Darknorth." Daolord Brightfish smiled at him.

Ning felt quite startled, but on the surface he responded in a very calm manner, "Big brother Brightfish."

Brightfish was absolutely gorgeous! In terms of appearance, he was every bit the equal of Su Youji. It must be remembered that Su Youji trained in the techniques of Feixian the Exalted, and possessed such great charm that her smiles alone were incredibly alluring. Although Daolord Brightfish wasn't that charming, he truly was shockingly handsome, and he was also had a willowy, elegant form. And yet... judging from his aura, Ning was certain that he was male!

His face and his body was comparable to that of a peerless beauty, but he was a man? No wonder Ning was so flabbergasted!

"This is Brightfish's avatar," Solesky said. "Brightfish himself is adventuring in the outside world. He's far more talented than both myself and Battlemaster."

"You praise me too much, big brother," Daolord Brightfish hurriedly said.

Solesky laughed loudly. "Not at all, not at all. Ji Ning, as for our other brothers... I'll introduce you to them later, over some drinks and conversation."

Ning nodded but couldn't help but ask, "What about the three Wujiao Godbeasts?"

Everyone fell silent.

Daolord Solesky let out a sigh. "Northrest... ugh. Those three Wujiao Godbeasts caused Northrest's death. Vastheaven Palace would never let them off for that. Although they fled long ago, Battlemaster was able to use his Numerancy to divine their location. The three of them were wiped out by us long ago."

And so a question that had plagued Ning for quite some time was answered.

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Next was the welcoming banquet, where all the brothers of Vastheaven Palace gathered together.

They all drank wine and chatted happily. Vastheaven Palace had no hierarchies; every single member was a good brother to the others. Even Daolords would merely be respectfully addressed as 'big brother' due to their power. This was just the type of atmosphere Ning liked, and he could sense that everyone treated him with sincerity.

Over the course of the banquet, Ning got to know more than half of the brothers of Vastheaven Palace, as well as some who were still adventuring in the outside world.

After the banquet.

"Ji Ning, Vastheaven Palace is quite a large place. We have many residences within it, most of which are empty. This one, this one, that one, and that one... all of them are free for the choosing. Just pick whichever

one you like.” After the banquet, Solesky personally guided Ning off.

“Then I’ll choose this one.” Ning made his choice.

“Right. When do you wish for us to hold the formal welcoming ceremony?” Solesky looked at Ning. Technically, Ning simply had the talisman of welcome; he hadn’t actually joined Vastheaven Palace.

“A month from now,” Ning said. Right now, the most important task before him was resurrecting his parents.

“Alright.” Solesky was in no rush. To cultivators, a month truly was nothing.

.....

Vastheaven Palace. Within the Darknorth estate.

“Pillsaint, Youji, I need to go into secluded meditation for a period of time. If there’s nothing important, do not disturb me,” Ning instructed.

“Yes, Master.” Pillsaint and Su Youji both acknowledged the order.

Ning nodded, then entered his meditation chambers.

Rumble... the doors to the meditation chambers swung shut. Ning sat down in the lotus position, then closed his eyes. His mind was completely focused on the distant Three Realms.

.....

The primordial chaos outside the Three Realms.

A black-robed Ji Ning was striding through the dimensions. He quickly emerged from his own estate and arrived in the void of the Three Realms.

Whoosh.

The black-robed Ning stepped into yet another dimension as he stood there within the Three Realms, sensing the fluctuations rippling through it.

It had been far, far too long since he had entered the Three Realms and the area of influence its essences held sway over. For many years now, this had been a forbidden area for him. If he dared to take so much as a single

step into it, he would've died and his Dao would've vanished.

"The Three Realms." The black-robed Ning swept his gaze across the three thousand major worlds and the trillions of minor worlds. Even everything within the Celestial Realm and the Netherworld Kingdom was contained within his gaze.

Chapter 10: The Three Realms

The black-robed Ji Ning's gaze was focused upon a river that flowed through the void. This river... was the River of Destiny.

Destiny was omnipresent. All living beings had their own destiny. Even powerful cultivators like Ning or mighty Eternal Emperors had their own destinies as well. So long as you were alive, you would have a destiny all your own! These countless destinies came together to form an endless Sea of Destiny, with the destiny of the living beings of the Three Realms being merely a small rivulet of that endless sea.

This void river was all but indetectable to ordinary living creatures, but Ning was able to see countless truesouls flowing through that great river.

Whoosh. Ning swept the river searchingly with his gaze.

"Father. Mother!" Ning suddenly revealed a look of excitement on his face. He had discovered two truesouls which were located right next to each other, rising and falling through the 'waves' of the river together. Ning was very familiar with the auras given off by those two truesouls. He would never be able to forget them.

Those truesouls were the truesouls belonging to his father and his mother.

Only major powers who had personally seen Yuchi Snow and Ji Yichuan would be able to locate their truesouls within the endless flow of truesouls in the River of Destiny.

"Freeze!" Ning sent out his will. Rumble... an invisible, powerful stream of sword-intent that was as gentle as water instantly encompassed the entire River of Destiny, causing it to come to a complete halt.

Merely seeing the River of Destiny was easy, but to draw truesouls out from within it and then revive them was incredibly difficult. This was because such an action represented going against the will of the heavens and changing the flows of destiny; it went against the very laws of the Three Realms themselves. However, Ning was now powerful enough to

annihilate the Three Realms with ease; he was naturally able to easily accomplish a task like this.

Still... if Ning's parents had perished in an Everworld, there would be no way for Ning to retrieve their truesouls from that Everworld's River of Destiny! This was because the repercussions of breaking an Everworld's laws were far greater. Most likely, only Eternal Emperors and outlandishly strong Daolords would be able to resist those repercussions.

.....

The River of Destiny had been frozen in place. None of the countless mortal denizens in the Three Realms could sense the laws of the Three Realms trying to fight back, but the more powerful Immortals and Fiendgods of the Three Realms could.

The Crescent world. Mount Innerheart. Two figures were seated opposite of each other, holding a casual conversation regarding the world and the Dao.

"Eh? The River of Destiny just came to a halt?" The bearded, azure-haired man suddenly let out a surprised call.

"Most likely, only my disciple Ji Ning is capable of forcing the River of Destiny to come to a halt." Opposite the first man was a white-haired, white-bearded old man - Subhuti.

These two were currently the two strongest members of the Three Realms. One was Ning's master, Subhuti, who had been ranked the top master of the Dao of Spacetime in all the Three Realms. Ever since Fuxi, Shennong, Suiren, Daoist Three Purities, Lord Tathagata, Houyi, and the others had all sacrificed themselves in the Endwar, Subhuti had become the number one expert of the entire Nuwa Alliance. But of course, that was excluding Ji Ning, who had long ago reached the World level.

The other man was the Lord of All Fiends of the Seamless Gate. He was now their sole leader, 'Windfiend'... and he had long ago surpassed the limits of the Heavenly Daos in movement speed.

Both were at extremely high levels of enlightenment and were far

superior to most Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals in this regard. Ever since Ning had reached the World level, he began to transmit many techniques back to the Three Realms! With those techniques guiding them, they instantly became far more powerful than they had been in the past. At present, they had reached such a high level of insight that they were able to break through to the World level whenever they wished. This was why they often sat together to discuss the Dao with each other. When all of their arrangements and preparations were complete, they would break through to the World level.

“It really is Ji Ning.” Windfiend’s divine sense instantly spread out across all the Three Realms, discovering the black-robed Ning standing in the void of the Three Realms. He could sense that stately, awe-inspiring aura of majesty radiating out from Ning.

“Let’s go.” Subhuti waved a finger, causing a spatial vortex to appear next to them. Whoosh! The two both entered the spatial vortex, then hastened towards Ning.

.....

“The River of Destiny froze?”

Mt. Ling, in the eastern lands of the Celestial Realm.

Buddha Maitreya sat above all others. He was now the new Lord Buddha of the Buddhist Sangha. He had always had a very high level of enlightenment, being just slightly inferior to Lord Tathagata himself. Ever since Ji Ning had transmitted many new techniques to the Three Realms, he had grown much more powerful and was second only to the likes of Subhuti and Windfiend.

.....

Fruit-Flower Mountain.

“Heeeeey, it’s my junior apprentice-brother!” The Monkey King had been munching away at his food when he suddenly froze, then revealed a look of delight. “Time to go take a look!”

Sun Wukong was an incredibly talented figure, and he was now one of

the top ten figures of the Three Realms.

.....

Daoist Jade Cauldron, Kuafu, Holyflame, Bloodswan, Amitabha, and the other experts of the Three Realms all sensed the ripples and immediately hastened over there as well.

.....

The black-robed Ning stood there amidst the void of the Three Realms. He could sense space rippling in the area around him as one figure after another began to emerge.

His master, Subhuti. His senior apprentice-brothers Sun Wukong and Silvermoon. Buddha Maitreya. Buddha Amitabha. Jade Cauldron. Bloodswan. They all began to appear, one after another, and Ning nodded in their direction. As for these Immortals and Fiendgods, they just watched afar, not moving to intervene. Ever since Ning had broken through to the World level, he had continuously transmitted techniques back to them.

In truth, Ning was quite amazed. The cultivators of the Three Realms weren't necessarily all monstrous geniuses, but on the whole they were clearly far more talented than cultivators from other chaosworlds! The Three Sovereigns of Mankind, Daoist Three Purities, Tathagata, Houyi... without any guidance or legacies, they had reached such astonishingly great heights in enlightenment that they were able to battle against Elder Gods despite merely being at the True God level! This meant they were at a far higher level of enlightenment than most Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals.

If they were given good techniques or good teachers... the Three Sovereigns of Mankind, Daoist Three Purities, Lord Tathagata, Houyi, and the others all could've become World-level cultivators! It must be understood that Buddha Jueming originally hadn't been a particularly impressive member of the Buddhist Sangha; his innate talent was far inferior to the likes of Daoist Three Purities, Tathagata, and the others. It had been very hard for him to even reach the True God level! However, after spending many arduous years in Undermoon Lake as an Empyrean

God, he had received the legacy techniques of World God Northrest and had thus been able to reach the Elder God level.

This was a testament to how important good techniques and good teachers were.

It wasn't just the Three Realms; even the experts of the Seamless Chaosworld, such as Everwood, Demonheart, Devilhand, and Windfiend were also extremely spectacular figures who were comparable to Daoist Three Purities and Lord Tathagata.

"The Pangu Chaosworld and the Seamless Chaosworld... the cultivators who arose from it are all far more talented and impressive than the cultivators in other chaosworlds." Ning was secretly amazed. "There has to be a reason behind it."

The endless primordial chaos was filled with mysteries and secrets. No one would ever dare claim that he or she fully understand it. Not even the almighty Hegemon could make that claim, and so Ning didn't spend too much time on this question.

"I've now perfectly joined five Supreme Daos together. After I become a Daolord, I'll become much more powerful. By then, I should be able to buy some truly precious legacies and techniques, then transmit them to the Three Realms and strengthen it," Ning mused to himself.

The techniques he had previously transmitted were all fairly ordinary. He had also transmitted a few ordinary techniques left behind by Northrest. As for the more valuable legacies? Ning had learned quite a few! He had learned from Emperor Mirrorsnow, had viewed the eighty thousand-plus sword-arts in the sword pagodas of the Sword Palace, and had acquired the legacy of a deceased Hegemon as well as the [Seven Leafpill Chapters]. However, he had sworn lifeblood oaths to never divulge any of them to others. Even though he was able to teach the first chapter of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] to others, that chapter only pertained to the Dao of Alchemy. How many cultivators truly focused in this Dao? Too few!

If you wished to truly strengthen an organization, you needed all types of

techniques and legacies, especially powerful ones. This was no easy task.

"Prior to today, I've only been able to transmit fairly ordinary techniques back, but the Three Realms has already strengthened dramatically. Master and Windfiend are about to break through to the World level at any moment, while Maitreya and the others might succeed as well. If I was able to transmit better techniques to them... my homeland might give birth to an entire crop of World-level cultivators."

Ning eagerly awaited such a day, the day when the Three Realms truly skyrocketed in prominence.

.....

Ning continued to focus upon the River of Destiny. His gentle sword-intent moved with incredible softness, but it contained unbelievable power! The gentle sword-intent carefully embraced those two truesouls within its grip.

Rumble...

The entire River of Destiny began to roil about in protest as a backlash began.

Ning was incredibly careful. He obviously didn't care about the backlash, but he was worried that it might cause collateral damage to his parents' truesouls. Even the slightest bit of damage might cause those frail truesouls to instantly disintegrate.

"Hmph." Ning's sword-intent wrapped those two truesouls in protective layers as it slowly drew them both from the depths of the River of Destiny.

Rumble... the backlash from the River of Destiny grew increasingly powerful. Towards the end, the entire river began to writhe about as it fought to hold onto those two truesouls. Ning's sword-intent, however continuously protected the truesouls with layers of barriers, taking on the full force of the backlash head-on.

Whoosh! Finally, the mass of sword-light flew out from within the River of Destiny. The River of Destiny had failed, and so it quickly regained its normal calm and continued to function stably as it had in the past.

“Success.” Subhuti, Windfiend, Sun Wukong, Jade Cauldron, and the others all revealed looks of delight when they saw this.

“Darknorth, congratulations.”

“Ji Ning, congratulations.” They all called out to express their congratulations. Now that the truesouls had been drawn out, the next step of restoring their souls and manifesting bodies would be easy.

Ning couldn’t disguise his own excitement either.

Chapter 11: Heartforce, Level Five

Ji Ning suppressed his excitement, then gently waved a finger and sent two streaks of chaos nectar outwards.

His Primaltwin didn't have much chaos nectar, as it had been here defending the Three Realms this entire time. It did, however, have at least a few drops. Since Yuchi Snow and Ji Yichuan's souls and bodies weren't particularly powerful, a single drop of chaos nectar each was more than enough.

Whoosh. Whoosh. The two drops of chaos nectar flew towards the two different truesouls. The two drops quickly encompassed the two souls, then immediately and naturally began to build a soul around each truesoul. Although it was also possible to use the Six Paths of Reincarnation to form souls and bodies, those bodies and souls would be of fairly low quality; at most, they would allow the reincarnated individuals to at most be equivalent to natural-born Xiantian lifeforms.

But if one directly used chaos nectar to rebuild a body and soul, it would result in the creation of a completely perfect body!

The souls were now fully formed.

Instantly, the two souls rose up to stand there within the emptiness of the void. One soul was of Yuchi Snow, the other was of Ji Yichuan. The two had completely regained consciousness, and Ning was using his Immortal energy to help them awaken the memories locked within their souls. At his current level of power, Ning was able to help them reawaken their memories with nothing more than a thought, even though Yuchi Snow and Ji Yichuan had actually died two lives ago.

"Ning. Son." The two stared at Ning in disbelief.

Ning was rather excited. He immediately said, "Father. Mother. Don't worry about me right now. Let your fleshly bodies be remade first. All you need to do is wish for it to happen. The chaos nectar around you has marvelous properties and is capable of forming all things."

Flesh and even clothes were beginning to form in the empty area around their souls; there was of course no way Ning would leave them unclad. Gradually, Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow were able to see many figures off in the distance. Soon, the two had fully materialized. Clad in snowy white furs, the two stood there in the emptiness of the void.

The thing was, Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow actually had an additional set of memories. This set came from the life they had spent as Willowriver Chuan and Eastflow Snow.

“Snow.” Ji Yichuan looked at his wife.

“Yichuan.” Yuchi Snow stared back at him.

They had been together in both the past life and the present life. During her life in Swallow Mountain, Yuchi Snow had died due to illness. Ji Yichuan had suffered heavy wounds as well. In the end, he felt he had nothing else to live for and so had perished as well. The next life had been an even sadder one; in the end, the curs of the Seamless Gate had captured everyone in their city and used them to refine magic treasures, resulting in their souls being shattered.

Ji Yichun and Yuchi Snow held each other’s hands.

“Ning. Son.” They turned their gazes towards Ning.

“W-what’s going on?” Yichuan was completely puzzled. The area around them was filled with empty space, and they were even able to see figures who radiated auras of incredible power off in the distance.

Snow was both excited and puzzled. She had died, as had Yichuan, right? And how was it that they were able to stand there within the emptiness of space as easily as standing on flat land? What was supporting them? But they felt certain that this all had to do with their son.

“Father, Mother. All those bad things have come to an end. Nothing will be able to separate us ever again.” Ning’s voice was trembling slightly as he spoke.

Snow’s eyes immediately reddened and she walked straight forwards to embrace Ning. Ning hugged his mother back as well.

His mother's embrace... it was as warm as it had been in his memories.

Ning suddenly raised his head. His father, Yichuan, had walked over as well, and Ning reached out to include his father in their joint embrace.

Their family of three was together again.

As for Subhuti, Windfiend, and the other nearby figures, they all sighed as they watched with looks of envy. Many of them had been born from the primordial chaos or from Heaven and Earth; they had never had parents before. However, they could sense how deep the relationship between Ning and his parents were.

.....

As he embraced his father and his mother, the tension which had been within his soul for so many years was able to finally be released. And in this moment... Ning's heartforce broke through to the fifth stage and began to rapidly expand in power.

The Endwar of the Three Realms had resulted in Ning finally understanding the Heartsword Realm and using it to slay Old Man Yuan. Logically speaking, he should've been able to step into the fifth stage of heartforce at that time. However, he had too many things weighing down his heart, causing him to be stuck at that bottleneck.

After leaving the Three Realms, he had entered the Endless Territories. He had experienced many things in the Brightshore Kingdom and the alternate universe, eventually linking five Supreme Daos together in a perfect manner. His mind and his heart had both been strengthened tremendously, but he still remained stuck at that bottleneck.

His heart had never been able to see through to the 'truth' of life. Now, after reaching Vastheaven Palace and rescuing his parents truesouls from the River of Destiny, Ning was finally able to truly relax. As a result, he naturally reached the 'truth' level of heartforce.

Ning did have another firm desire in the deepest parts of his heart... reviving Yu Wei! However, he knew exactly how difficult that would be. Even the number one expert in the Dao of Seals in the alternate universe,

Emperor Maniseal, had been unable to revive his own disciple. Ning had never heard of someone successfully doing such a thing, which was a testament to how difficult it would be. But precisely because it was so difficult, Ning was able to face it fairly calmly.

Boom! His heartforce massively expanded. The many things he had experienced in recent years caused Ning's heartforce to instantly skyrocket and reach the apex of the fifth stage. His heartforce and his sea of consciousness joined together, causing certain changes to arise.

If his heartforce was a bit stronger, the fusion between his heartforce and his sea of consciousness would've allowed him to establish a heartworld. Only by establishing a heartworld would one be truly considered a Heartforce Cultivator, and those were truly, incredibly frightening figures. Heartforce Cultivators who had reached the Verge as Daolords would have heartworlds that were as vast as an entire territory. At this point, the descent of their heartworld projection alone would be enough to easily crush to death an ordinary Verge-level Daolord.

But using a heartworld projection was merely the crudest way of fighting with heartforce.

True Heartforce Cultivators had certain mysterious secret arts which were truly formidable. Bertulu, Eastcult, and Greatjoy had all mastered and joined multiple Supreme Daos together, but Bertulu was a Heartforce Cultivator! In an actual battle, he would've been stronger than both of the others.

If Bertulu had managed to fully learn the [Heartsword] sword-art and learned how to perfectly mesh his heartforce with his close combat abilities, his powers would've skyrocketed even further. Alas, the [Heartsword] sword-art was extremely difficult. Ning himself was a sword cultivator who was also skilled in heartforce, which was why he had been able to reach a basic level of skill in it, but Bertulu was not!

.....

The void above the Three Realms.

Yichuan and Snow both released their son, then smiled as they gazed at

him.

"Ning, son. Tell us what in the world is going on. Your mother and I are both completely confused," Yichuan said.

"The story is a long one. I trust both of you know about the Seamless Gate," Ning said.

"The Seamless Gate." Yichuan and Snow both turned very solemn. "We've heard of them. The stories say that they are the ones causing chaos throughout the Three Realms." The two of them had died due to the machination of the Seamless Gate.

"Right. That had been a true tribulation, and many of our seniors perished during it," Ning said softly. He couldn't help but think back to that grand final battle and those figures who had calmly sacrificed their own lives. "But that war ended long ago. The Three Realms is now peaceful once more. I was bound by a lifeblood oath and so I wasn't able to retrieve your truesouls from the River of Destiny until today. Only then could I bring you back to life."

"River of Souls? Truesoul?" Both Yichuan and Snow were a bit dazed. Neither of them had reached high levels of cultivation in either of their two lives. They had no idea that someone whose soul had been shattered could be brought back to life.

"Father, Mother. We can discuss these things later in the privacy of our home." Ning smiled, then turned and looked at the nearby figures. He called out, "Master."

Subhuti flew over.

"Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow. The two of you certainly gave birth to a wonderful son," Daofather Subhuti said with a laugh.

"Father, Mother, this person here is my master, Patriarch Subhuti," Ning said. "If it hadn't been for Master's guidance, I never would've reached my current heights."

"Ahaha! Ji Ning, your accomplishments were due to you and you alone. I didn't help much," Subhuti immediately said.

Ning continued, “And that gentleman over there is the leader of the Seamless Gate, the Lord of All Fiends.”

The distant Windfiend nodded towards Ning’s parents. With a flicker, he appeared next to Patriarch Subhuti as well. “I was wracked by guilt when I learned that Ji Ning’s parents died due to the actions of my Seamless Gate! Although it was Demonheart who instigated that calamity, I’m ashamed to say that I didn’t act to stop him.”

“The leader of the Seamless Gate?” Yichuan and Snow were both stunned. The Seamless Gate was the major force behind the chaos that had swept the Three Realms. Supposedly, not even the leaders of the Daoist Path or the Buddhist Sangha were able to do anything to them. How was it that their son knew people like this? How powerful had their son become, exactly?!

When the two of them had first perished, Ning hadn’t even gone to the Black-White College.

“This person is Buddha Maitreya of the Buddhist Sangha. This person is Daoist Jade Cauldron of the Daoist Path...” Ning began to introduce the nearby Immortals and Fiendgods to his parents.

Yichuan and Snow were growing increasingly confused. Although they hadn’t heard of most of these figures, they had heard of a few of them and knew them to be figures whose reputations shook the Three Realms.

“These are now the most elite Immortals and Fiendgods of the Three Realms,” Ning explained to his parents, then turned and said in a sonorous voice, “Friends, I’m going to accompany my parents and leave for a time. In a few days, I’ll invite you all to a grand feast that I will hold.”

“You are far too kind, Darknorth.”

“Haha, this is the first time that Darknorth is hosting an Immortal banquet.”

“We’ll definitely attend!”

Ning smiled, said a few words to his master Subhuti, then led his parents away.

“Father. Mother. Come with me.” An aura of incredible sword-intent covered the three of them, then hurtled them through the void to the home where Autumn Leaf, Brightmoon, Uncle White, Little Qing, and Bluecliff Xiaoyu were residing.

Chapter 12: A Foundation for the Three Realms

The Three Realms. The Grand Xia world. Swallow Mountain.

Long ago, Ji Ning had removed the entire Swallow Mountain area from the Grand Xia for the sake of protecting it from the great war. Now that the calamity had come to an end, Ning had established his own major world, the Darknorth world, and had planted the Ji clan into that world.

As for Swallow Mountain of the Grand Xia? This was where Ning had grown up, and so he had rebuilt it. Autumn Leaf, Uncle White, Little Qing, and Brightmoon normally lived here.

Serpentwing Lake. Brightheart Island.

Whoosh.

Ji Ning, Ji Yichuan, and Yuchi Snow all appeared in the air above Serpentwing Lake.

“It looks just like it did all those years ago.” Yichuan and his wife Snow stood there in the air, staring at the lake. “Serpentwing Lake hasn’t changed at all.”

“One thing that did change was that the Serpentwing monster died long ago,” Ning joked by their side.

“Ning, son, what on earth has happened in recent years?” Snow looked at her son.

“I’ll tell you later. Mom, Dad, look over there. Your granddaughter is coming.” Ning pointed off into the distance.

A black-robed maiden was flying towards them from afar, her face covered with joy. Behind her were Autumn Leaf, Uncle White, Little Qing, Bluecliff Xiaoyu, Mu Northson, and Immortal Diancai.

“Young master.”

“Senior apprentice-brother.”

“Master.” They each called out joyfully towards Ning.

As they flew closer, Autumn Leaf and Uncle White were stunned, especially Uncle White. He stared blankly at the two figures standing by Ning’s side, and his tears suddenly came cascading downwards.

Yichuan stared back at Uncle White, then revealed a smile. “Little White.”

“Big brother.” Uncle White stared at Yichuan. The two were like brothers, and they had ventured through life and death by each other’s sides many times. They were extremely close to each other.

“Big sister Snow.” Uncle White then looked at Snow. “You... you all...”

“Master.” Autumn Leaf was extremely excited as well, and she hurriedly curtsied.

“Autumn Leaf?” Snow smiled and nodded. Ning had two attendants by his side when he was young. Spring Grass had died long ago, but Autumn Leaf had been by his side this entire time.

As for Ning, he stared at the black-robed maiden and barked, “Brightmoon, get over here and pay your respects to your grandmother and grandfather!”

Brightmoon was rather stunned. She had heard of her grandparents, but had never met them before. Upon hearing Ning’s orders, she immediately fell to her knees and said, “Brightmoon greets you, Grandfather and Grandmother.”

“Big brother... big sister Snow... this is Brightmoon. She’s the daughter of Ji Ning and Yu Wei,” Uncle White immediately said.

“Our granddaughter?” Yichuan and Snow were both overjoyed. When they died, Ning had still been quite young. Who would’ve thought that they’d suddenly have a grandchild?

“Rise, rise!” Snow immediately lifted her granddaughter up. The more she looked at Brightmoon, the happier she felt. Brightmoon’s appearance was similar to that of both Ning and Yu Wei. Although she looked more

like Yu Wei, she did have some of Ning's traits as well.

"What a beautiful girl. I have such a beautiful granddaughter! Your mother must be a beauty as well. Ning, son, where's your wife? Didn't Little White say that your wife's name is Yu Wei?" Snow smiled.

Everyone suddenly fell silent.

Snow and Yuchi didn't know what was going on, but everyone else knew what had happened. Years ago, Yu Wei had been publicly killed during the wars by the black-robed Godking.

Ning responded with perfect calm, "She's gone."

Yichu and Snow immediately understood. It seemed as though many things had happened over the years.

"Grandpa, Grandma, there seems to be many things you aren't aware of. Let me tell you." Brightmoon immediately began to warmly narrate the story to Yichuan and Snow. "Shortly after you passed away, but before my father had joined the Black-White College; that's where I'll start the story. Haha. The two of you are going to be stunned by this..."

Seeing this, Ning just stood there and watched with a smile on his face.

There was no need to hide any of his past history. Yichuan and Snow listened to their daughter, Brightmoon, narrate Ning's story. Every so often, Uncle White, Little Qing, or Xiaoyu would add in a few words as well. Even Ning's junior apprentice-brother, Mu Northson, would jump in to explain at some parts, as did Ning's master Immortal Diancai.

Yichuan and his wife Snow were completely stunned by this story. This wasn't a story; it was an absolute legend.

Although they knew that their son was a genius, how could they have imagined that their talented sword-wielding son of Swallow Mountain would become such a dazzling figure? He not only had reached parity with the highest-level Immortals and Fiendgods of the Three Realms, he had played a decisive role in ending the war! As for his current level of power, it was completely unfathomable.

They also learned about Yu Wei's death. Unfortunately, when her soul was destroyed ever her truesoul was torn apart. There was no way to revive her at present.

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A few days later, Ning held a Three Realms Banquet at Brightheart Island of Swallow Mountain. All of the top-level Immortals and Fiendgods of the Three Realms came to take part.

Of course, many of Ning's old friends came as well, such as the other members of Mount Innerheart, including Crazy Ji, Sun Wukong, and RedSnow. Even the likes of Northmont Baiwei and the Sloppy Daoist, who had been their eldest apprentice-brother at the Black-White College, had arrived. This was Ning's first time hosting such a sumptuous banquet, and at the end he even expounded upon the Dao, bringing great enlightenment to many of the Immortals and Fiendgods of the Three Realms.

.....

On the other side of the primordial chaos. Vastheaven Territory. Vastheaven Palace.

In the blink of an eye, more than a month passed after Ning's arrival at Vastheaven Palace. This was the day of Ning's formal welcoming banquet.

"Ji Ning! JI NING!" Daolord Solesky was hollering towards him from far away.

"Big brother?" Ning emerged from his estate, Su Youji and Pillsaint by his side. Ning smiled. "I could hear you screaming at me from far away."

"I wanted to see you a few days ago, but Pillsaint told me that you were in secluded meditation," Daolord Solesky said with a laugh.

"My big brother wished to see me?" Ning turned to glance at Pillsaint. Pillsaint hurriedly explained, "Daolord Solesky said that it was nothing important and told me not to disturb you."

Daolord Solesky nodded as well. "There is no rush, but... Ji Ning, you really did me wrong this time. You captured Daolord Blesswing, a Daolord

of the Third Step of Clearwind Temple! A Daolord of the Third Step! And you captured him! How could you hide such an incredible feat from me and not tell me? If it hadn't been for brother Eastherd giving us a detailed narration a while ago, I would have had no idea whatsoever."

Ning was startled. He immediately said, "Alright, that was definitely my fault."

To be honest, Ning truly hadn't considered the capture to be a big deal. In his eyes, Clearwind Temple wasn't a threat at all. Even if Patriarch Clearwind himself came, he wouldn't be able to do anything to Vastheaven Palace itself. If things really did go south, Ning could simply use one of the deceased Hegemon's Dao-seals to just kill the man.

Ning's complete lack of concern regarding this matter was why he hadn't considered it to be relevant. With his mind completely occupied with reviving his parents, he truly had forgotten to tell Vastheaven Palace about this matter.

"It won't be much of a problem. With my avatar here, we won't need to fear Clearwind at all." Daolord Solesky was rather excited. "But for you to have captured a Daolord of the Third Step... hah! I feel giddy just imagining the look on Clearwind's face."

"I've already subdued the Daolord. Big brother Solesky, you are free to deal with him as you see fit," Ning said.

"You were the one to capture him. How can I be the one to decide?" Daolord Solesky immediately said.

"Don't be so courteous, big brother. If you want to use this situation to squeeze and extort Clearwind Temple, feel entirely free to do so."

Daolord Solesky shook his head. "You don't understand what type of a man Patriarch Clearwind is. He won't be easy to blackmail. Ah, forget it. There's no way Clearwind will just ignore something like this. We'll wait and see."

Ning nodded. "Right. Big brother, there's something I need to ask you to help me out with."

"What is it?" Daolord Solesky asked.

"I want to collect some techniques, secret arts, and divine abilities," Ning said. "I need all types of techniques."

Daolord Solesky looked at Ning. "Are you planning to set up your own school?"

Ning shook his head. "No, it's for the sake of my homeland. My homeland doesn't have any good techniques. I want to procure some good ones for them," Ning said.

"Vastheaven Palace has some basic techniques which can be transmitted to others without any issues," Daolord Solesky said, "But the more powerful ones... we have our own rules about their disposition."

Ning said, "We'll do everything in accordance with the rules! I need all types of divine abilities, techniques, and secret arts below the Daolord level, and I'll pay as much chaos nectar as the rules require." Even the Dao Alliance was willing to sell its many secret arts and divine abilities, to say nothing of Vastheaven Palace. Even Daolord Allgod's [Novessence Water] and other such techniques had ended up being sold to the Brightshore Kingdom.

Ning only needed techniques that were below the Daolord level; more profound techniques were not necessary for now. Vastheaven Palace didn't really have that many powerful legacies either.

"Oh, below the Daolord level? That'll be easy." Daolord Solesky nodded. "However... over the course of countless years, Vastheaven Palace has accumulated quite a few techniques. If we were to give you everything we have, it'd cost you three million cubes of chaos nectar! I don't want to take advantage of you; the rules are the rules. These techniques were accumulated by countless brothers over the course of countless years."

"Alright." Ning nodded. "Three million it is."

Vastheaven Palace was an ancient school which dominated the nearby territories and had been around for countless chaos cycles. As a result, it had an ample supply of techniques which were below the Daolord level.

This was why this place was considered a holy land for cultivation to many. Now that Ning had purchased all of its techniques, the Three Realms' foundation had been established. Most of the cultivators in the Three Realms were merely at the Elder God or Ancestral Immortal level, after all. To reach the World level and then become a Daolord was far too difficult.

In truth, if he couldn't buy what he needed from Vastheaven Palace, he would've done so from the Dao Alliance. Only, that would be more troublesome and likely more expensive as well.

As for legacies which Daolords could use? Even Vastheaven Palace only had a very few such legacies, and they had either been left behind by its Daolords or had been acquired by them due to luck; they wouldn't be casually taught to others. They were not casually taught to others. What Ning was planning to do was to create a few legacies of his own and leave them to the Three Realms! For example, his [Brightmoon] sword-art was definitely one of the most supreme of legacies! But of course, not just anyone would be permitted to study it. The interested parties would have to go through many layers of trials before they could learn the Sword Dao which Ning had so painstakingly created.

"Using Vastheaven Palace's repository, built up over the course of countless years, to serve as the foundation of the Three Realms shall be enough." Ning felt a surge of joy in his heart.

Chapter 13: Omega Sword Dao

"Hah! You were able to agree to three million cubes with such ease." Daolord Solesky laughed. "As expected for someone capable of capturing a Daolord of the Third Step. Your resources truly are extraordinary, eh?"

"I just had better luck than most," Ji Ning said.

"Big brother Solesky, all of our brothers have arrived and are waiting. Are you done chatting?" The Daolord Brightfish's laughter could be heard from afar.

"Patience, my brother Brightfish! We'll be there shortly." Daolord Solesky looked at Ning. "Come, come! Let us make haste. The welcoming banquet is about to commence."

The formal welcoming ceremony took place. After the ceremony ended, Ning was now considered a formal member of Vastheaven Palace. This caused Daolord Solesky, Daolord Battlemaster, and Daolord Brightfish to all feel slightly relieved. They could tell that Ning was guaranteed to be an extraordinary Daolord. Although he had a talisman of welcome, it was entirely permissible for him to change his mind prior to actually joining Vastheaven Palace.

Now that he had joined, he truly would be a lifelong friend and brother.

.....

Rumble...

Within the darkness of space. A shrine which was emanating ripples of strange azure power was flying at high speeds. As the energy streams surged and flowed around it, it was able to hurtle through space at astonishing speeds.

An old man dressed in handsome black robes stood within the shrine, staring silently into space. His eyes were as calm as the depths of the sea. Beneath him stood seven respectful World-level cultivators.

"He managed to capture Blesswind. This young fellow named Darknorth really is quite daring." The black-robed elder said calmly, "He's even more

daring than Solesky.”

One of the World-level disciples said immediately, “Patriarch, Darknorth must’ve acquired some special treasures thanks to a stroke of great luck. Daolord Blesswind said it himself, right? He was beaten by a golem which had the power of an apex Daolord of the Third Step, then captured due to a nasty trick they pulled on him. No matter what, this Darknorth is merely a World-level cultivator. He won’t be able to fight back against you at all, Patriarch.”

“Can’t be too complacent,” Patriarch Clearwind said calmly. “These strokes of great luck can sometimes involve truly earth-shattering treasures.”

He was a Daolord of the Fourth Step. Daolords of the Fourth Step were completely different from Daolords of the Third Step. To reach the fourth step meant reaching the Verge of the Daomerge, which meant that you had reached terrifying heights in a certain Dao.

The reason why he was able to feud against Daolord Solesky for so long was because he was at a similar level of power. Both Patriarch Clearwind and Daolord Solesky were extremely powerful, even amongst other Daolords of the Fourth Step. They had both experienced many dangers as well. They naturally were quite skilled in keeping themselves alive and would never underestimate any opponent.

When Heartlord Solewind had shattered that Dao-seal, he had been able to easily slay a Daolord of the Third Step. But if he had encountered Patriarch Clearwind? Forget about a Dao-seal; even if the Palace Lord of the Heart Palace struck out, if he wasn’t careful Patriarch Clearwind would probably be able to escape.

“Solesky. It’s been quite some time since I’ve sparred with him.” Azure light flickered through Patriarch Clearwind’s eyes.

Vastheaven Palace had two Daolords of the Fourth Step, while Clearwind Temple merely had one. However, these two organizations were equivalent in power. This was a testament to how formidable Patriarch Clearwind was.

.....

The Three Realms. Brightheart Island.

Within Ning's study. The study was filled with rolls of jade slips. Ning casually picked up a jade slip, then infused the set of sword-arts he had developed into the jade slip.

"For Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals, less abstruse sword-arts are more appropriate." Ning's left hand was casually demonstrating one sword-art after another. He had perfectly joined together five Supreme Daos; in terms of creating sword-art techniques for Elder Gods or World Gods, not even the Brightshore Hegemon would necessarily be a match for Ning.

"3600 low-level techniques, 108 decent techniques, and 5 high-level sword-arts; the Yin-Yang stance, the Soleheart stance, the Blood Drop stance, the Shadowless stance, and the Heavenbreaker stance. The coremost technique shall be the perfect junction of these five types of sword-intent."

The sword-arts which Ning had created included all types of sword-arts, including sword-arts that were more suited for women, sword-arts that were meant to be used with just one arm, sword-arts that suited those who were a bit foolish... all types of sword-arts had been created, and the creation process was actually another way for Ning to analyze and better understand the nature of the Dao of the Sword.

Every so often, he'd raise his head and stare off into the distance. He was able to see to the distant lakeshore, where Ji Yichuan was training in sword-arts himself. Next to him watched Yuchi Snow, while their granddaughter Ji Brightmoon continuously called out words of advice and guidance. Brightmoon had indeed reached a much more impressive level of expertise in the Dao of the Sword than her grandfather Yichuan, and Yichuan actually enjoyed having his granddaughter teach him.

"Haha..." As Ning watched, he couldn't help but grin. His father, his mother, and his daughter Brightmoon.

Everything was so wonderful.

Ning then turned his attention to his sword-arts, putting more sword-arts on display then recording them into jade slips.

“Eh?” Ning came to a sudden halt. Although his gaze was focused on the distant lakeshore, his heart felt like the rising sun that was appearing above the watery horizon.

“The Sword Dao. That’s all there is to it. The Sword Dao is simply the Sword Dao.” Ning started to laugh. “Why divide it up into so many different ‘types’? Yin-Yang sword-intent, Blood Drop sword-intent, Shadowless sword-intent, Soleheart sword-intent, Heavenbreaker sword-intent... what difference does it make? They all belong to the Sword Dao. So that’s how it is. The question which has puzzled me for millions of years...”

As the saying went, one who suddenly understood the Dao in the morning would be content even if he died in the evening. This was the sort of satisfaction Ning was feeling right now.

It was excitement. It was a sense of contentment. This question had bedeviled him for millions of years in the Trileaf Realm, when he first sensed that his Sword Dao had yet to reach the limit. Now, with his parents and his daughter by his side, he suddenly had a moment of epiphany as he collated all these different sword-arts.

Rumble...

A wave of strange power was surging forth, resonating with the innermost depths of Ning’s soul.

Ning raised his head and stared into the skies. He could trace the sensation back to its origins. He could immediately sense that it was coming from incredibly far off within the primordial chaos. This place was so unfathomably distant that it was many times farther away than the entire size of the Endless Territories or the alternate universe. This was the place where the true prime essences of this universe lay.

That place was the place where the prime essence of the Dao of the Sword, one of the prime essences of this universe, resided.

Rumble...

One of the prime essences responsible for stabilizing this entire universe, the prime essence of the Dao of the Sword, was resonating with Ji Ning!

BOOM!

Within the Three Realms.

Ning was still within his study, but a terrifying aura of the Dao of the Sword suddenly erupted from his body. He himself was like a terrifying sword, and his every movement and motion contained the aura of the Dao of the Sword.

"Am I now the master of the Dao of the Sword?" Ning could sense that the unfathomably distant prime essence of the Dao of the Sword was resonating in tune with him. In this instant, he finally understood that this was the truly 'supreme' Dao of the Sword, the true apex of the Sword Dao.

This ultimate Sword Dao, this... this Omega Dao of the Sword... it didn't have 'multiple' versions of itself, such as Supreme Daos did.

The Dao of the Sword, in and of itself, was a complete Dao. It could simply transform into many different things, much like how the single supreme Taiji gave birth to the duality of Yin and Yang, which gave birth to the trigrams that then gave birth to all things.

The five perfectly joined Supreme Daos which Ning had previously developed were like the trigrams; although the three lines of the trigrams were joined together perfectly, they didn't truly represent the ultimate expression of the Dao of the Sword. Only by truly understanding the 'single' source would you be able to truly, completely, and perfectly understand and master the Dao of the Sword!

"This Omega Sword Dao is the true ultimate Sword Dao! Only now can I be considered a master of the Dao of the Sword." Ning felt as though he had just undergone a complete transformation. Finally, he understood why the difference in power between those who had joined two Supreme Daos, three Supreme Daos, or even five Supreme Daos was fairly small.

It didn't really matter how many Supreme Daos you were able to come up with... because above them was the complete and full Dao of the Sword. All types of sword-arts and all of the so-called branches... they were nothing more than parts of this true and complete Sword Dao.

"Come forth." Ning stepped forwards. Whoosh! He instantly transformed into a streak of light which then completely disappeared as he used the Shadowless evasion skill. In an instant, he appeared in the empty space above the Three Realms.

"The Solar Star." Ning stood there in space, staring at the enormous and scorchingly hot Solar Star off in the distance. He looked very ordinary, with his Sword Dao aura completely restrained, but that was what made him so terrifying. He was now fundamentally different from how he had been before.

"How terrifying. I'm able to tear through space without causing any disturbances at all, and I'm actually able to move ten times faster than the speed of light. Most Verge-level Daolords can only move at five times the speed of light!" Even Ning was frightened by how strong he had become. Previously, his most powerful attack had been his quadressence thunder and quadressence water, but the power of his Sword Dao now completely eclipsed both of those quadressence attacks combined.

"Now that I have comprehended my Omega Sword Dao, it is time for me to break through to become a Daolord." Ning's eyes were filled with blazing eagerness.

He had once felt that his chances of reviving Yu Wei were minuscule; not even Emperor Maniseal, an Eternal Emperor who had reached incredible heights in the Dao of Seals, was able to accomplish such a thing. But in the instant that he discovered and comprehended his Omega Sword Dao, he knew that his chances had just increased dramatically!

Chapter 14: Patriarch Clearwind

Vastheaven Palace. The Darknorth Estate.

Whoosh. Ji Ning was holding a tankard of wine, and the wine within it was flowing out from the opening and into his glass.

“Master, you’ve been really relaxed lately. A while ago you were training in the sword every day. Why have you stopped?” Su Youji walked towards them from afar.

“Who says I stopped?” Ning asked. “So long as my heart holds my sword-intent within it, I am still training in swordplay. If my heart is void of sword-intent, all the physical training in the world would be useless. To you, it might look like I’m just relaxing and drinking wine, but I’m actually training right now.”

“Sophistry,” Su Youji muttered.

Ning chuckled. He really did hold his sword-intent within his heart. The awesome Sword Dao that filled his heart and his complete control over it made Ning feel intoxicated. At his current level, the World level, Ning had already advanced as far as he could. Now, what he needed to do was to become a Daolord! Only then would he be able to advance further in his Omega Sword Dao.

The Omega Sword Dao represented that the path which Ning had chosen was truly the most ultimate of paths, but he had just barely began to trod this path. Even so, just starting on this path meant that his insights were already comparable to those of many Daolords of the Fourth Step; in some areas, he actually surpassed them!

In truth, the fact that Ning could move ten times faster than the speed of light was a testament to his skills. He didn’t have to rely on lightning-type skills or light-type skills to accomplish this; he was flying at ten times the speed of light solely through his mastery of the Sword Dao. This proved how profound a level of insight he had truly reached.

“It will be another thirty-plus years before my main body’s clone reaches

this place," Ning mused. "I suppose I'll have to just wait."

During the next thirty-plus years, Ning would spend his free time drinking wine and strolling about Vastheaven Palace. He would also memorize various new techniques and secret arts, so that his Primaltwin in the Three Realms would also gain access to them. Ning had spent three million cubes of chaos nectar to purchase all of Vastheaven Palace's techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts that were below the Daolord level. This was a truly massive amount of techniques, and it would take even Ning an extremely long period of time to memorize it all! Right now, Ning was just spending some of his free time working on memorizing the stockpile; he was planning to become a Daolord before truly memorizing them on a large scale.

Daolords were able to memorize things much more quickly than World-level cultivators were. They were on completely different levels.

"Eh?" Ning's face suddenly tightened slightly as he lifted up a cup of wine.

"What's wrong, Master?" Su Youji was puzzled.

"What a powerful sense of danger," Ning murmured softly. "An enemy has come."

"A powerful sense of danger? An enemy?" Su Youji was very puzzled. She was a Daolord, but she sensed nothing at all.

Ning rose to his feet. "Come. Let's take a look."

"Is there really an enemy?" Su Youji followed behind Ning, confused. However, after taking just a few steps she suddenly raised her head to stare towards the skies, stunned. "What a terrifyingly strong aura." She couldn't help but give a shocked glance to her master, Ji Ning. Ji Ning was merely at the World level, but he was actually able to discover this newcomer before she, a Daolord, did.

What she didn't realize was that ever since Ning had mastered his Omega Sword Dao, a natural Sword Dao domain was around him at all times, and he was the master of this domain! So long as they were still

within the reach of the ripples generated by the prime essence of the Dao of the Sword, Ning would be able to sense things around him with ease. The closer anyone moved towards him, the more powerful those sensations would be. Given Ning's accomplishments in the Sword Dao, his sensory powers were already comparable to those of Daolords of the Fourth Step.

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Moments later, Pillsaint came charging over as well. Ning, Su Youji, and Pillsaint quickly made their way to the main hall of Vastheaven Palace. By now, Daolord Solesky and Daolord Battlemaster had both arrived.

"Ji Ning."

"Darknorth." Daolord Solesky and Daolord Battlemaster both called out to him.

"Did something just happen?" Ning asked as he turned to stare intently towards the skies. Vastheaven Palace's main hall was the tallest building in the entire palace, and from this location they were able to see the limitless skies above them. Right now, a gray mass was moving towards them from the horizon, blotting out the sun and carrying an aura of such power that simply glancing at it was terrifying.

"That's Patriarch Clearwind," Daolord Battlemaster said. "A few days ago, I calculated through Numerancy that he would be coming. However... all we can do is sense his presence. There's nothing else we can do."

Daolord Solesky was quite calm. He snickered coldly, "I knew that old bastard wouldn't just let things slide like that."

"So he really did arrive." Ning had a solemn look on his face as well.

"Don't worry. At most, he'll just rant and rave from outside. There's no way he would dare enter Vastheaven Palace." Daolord Solesky snickered, "Although I merely have an avatar here and do not have the full power of my true self, the formations that we've established here over the course of countless years will ensure that I have nothing to fear. Given that Battlemaster is also here to help out... there's no way he would dare

enter."

The nearby Daolord Battlemaster nodded. "In the outside world, I might not be a match for Patriarch Clearwind, but there's nothing to fear here in Vastheaven Palace."

Rumble...

That gray mass continued to expand and reach out from the distant horizon. The other brothers of Vastheaven Palace were beginning to notice it as well, and they all made haste to the main hall.

"What's going on?"

"W-what's that?"

"Big brother Solesky, who is invading Vastheaven Palace?" All of them were shocked.

"None of our brothers in Vastheaven Palace are permitted to leave this place. Wait here for my orders," Daolord Solesky said calmly, his voice echoing within the ears of every single member of Vastheaven Palace.

"Yes." They all assented, knowing that this wasn't the time to be careless in their actions.

Soon, a wild gray wind with earth-shaking savagery completely covered the skies above Vastheaven Palace, blotting out the sun and making it so that there was almost no light left in the world. Vastheaven Palace became shadowed in darkness, but some of the formations covering it began to activate. Areas of light began to emerge within various parts of Vastheaven Palace, giving it a rather beautiful glow to it.

"Old man Solesky." A shrine suddenly emerged within the endless gray wind in the skies, and an old man dressed in gaudy black robes stood in front of the main entrance to it. His voice echoed within this entire world. "You really are quite bold. You actually dared to permit those young subordinates of yours to abduct Daolord Blesswind of my Clearwind Temple. If you know what's good for you, you shall hand him over along with those five World-level cultivators of his! If you do that, I'll just let this matter come to an end. Otherwise... hmpf!"

His cold snort echoed throughout the skies.

In Vastheaven palace.

"The rest of you should wait here," Daolord Solesky instructed.
"Battlemaster, let's go chat with that madman."

"Agreed." Daolord Battlemaster nodded.

Daolord Solesky and Daolord Battlemaster instantly soared high into the skies. Thanks to the barriers formations protecting Vastheaven Palace, someone outside wouldn't be able to see what was going on behind the formations, but those inside Vastheaven Palace were able to clearly make out what was happening outside.

Only when Daolord Solesky and Daolord Battlemaster flew into the skies were the members of Clearwind Temple able to see them.

"Clearwind." Daolord Solesky let out a little snicker. "Daolord Blesswind of your temple ended up being defeated by one of my World-level brothers. Neither Battlemaster nor I had anything to do with it! I'm actually quite amazed that you have the gall to come here, after one of your Daolords lost in such a pitiful fashion."

"He did lose, but that was only because that puny little World-level cultivator relied on rare treasures and golems." Patriarch Clearwind said angrily, "Solesky, hand over Daolord Blesswind and the others or—"

"Or what?" Daolord Solesky interrupted him, then said angrily, "Daolord Blesswind's life is in the hands of Vastheaven Palace. I can kill him whenever I want."

"If you want to kill him, kill him." Patriarch Clearwind said coldly, "I'll make sure that Vastheaven Palace pays the price for it."

If he wasn't able to bring Daolord Blesswind back, then it didn't matter whether Blesswind stayed alive or not.

"What a nasty, vicious man." Daolord Solesky snickered. "You know my true body isn't here, which is the only reason why you had the courage to run here and show off. Hmph! If you are feeling bold, try entering

Vastheaven Palace! I've already opened up the sealing formation; you are free to come in whenever you wish. Battlemaster, let's go back and keep drinking our wine. Forget about this madman."

"Agreed, big brother. Let's go back and have some wine." Battlemaster laughed as well.

Swoosh! Both flew back downwards.

Daolord Clearwind had an even uglier look on his face now. Vastheaven Palace had just completely ignored him... but he truly wouldn't dare to actually barge into Vastheaven Palace! In the outside world, he would hold an advantage over Daolord Battlemaster and Daolord Solesky's clone. In Vastheaven Palace, however, he would be completely dominated.

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Within Vastheaven Palace.

"Big brother Solesky, are we just going to let him wait there?" Ning asked.

"Forget about that madman. Let all of our brothers just drink here. Come, come! Let's drink our wine and just wait to see what that madman will do," Daolord Solesky said loudly.

Everyone present let out shouts of approval. The brothers of Vastheaven Palace were all quite bold figures, but they also kept a close eye on the outside. They had heard of Patriarch Clearwind's mighty reputation for countless years, after all.

"Excellent. Excellent!" The skies echoed with Patriarch Clearwind's enraged voice. "From this day forth, all of the cultivators of Vastheaven Palace can just forget about leaving it! I'll kill anyone and everyone who exits it! None of the cultivators of Vastheaven Palace shall be able to re-enter this place either. I shall execute anyone who tries to enter Vastheaven Palace! If you refuse to hand over Daolord Blesswind, I'll stay here and keep everyone trapped within Vastheaven Palace. One chaos cycle... ten chaos cycles... we'll take it slowly!"

"Let's wait for my true body to return. I want to see if you would dare try

and surround Vastheaven Palace once that happens." Daolord Solesky's cold voice rang out in reply as well.

Chapter 15: The Clone's Return

The Vastheaven Everworld.

A fur-clad youth was flying through the skies of this place. He stared at the distant gray storm that was blotting out the sun in the distance. That was the direction of Vastheaven Palace.

"I've finally made it," Ji Ning mused to himself.

The fur-clad youth was Ning's clone, which had travelled all the way here from the Badlands Territory. Now that he knew that Patriarch Clearwind was besieging Vastheaven Palace, he changed his appearance.

"Even though Patriarch Clearwind has never seen me, he probably knows what I look like," Ning mused.

Swoosh! The fur-clad Ning flew towards Vastheaven Palace at high speeds.

"Fellow Daoist. Fellow Daoist!" A black-robed figure suddenly appeared in the distant skies, and he used his Immortal energy to transmit his voice to Ning from afar. "The Daolords of Clearwind Temple have already surrounded Vastheaven Palace for thirty years. From the looks of things, they'll probably be here for a very long period of time. You must not travel any further, fellow Daoist. Ugh... I personally witnessed a weak little Elder God who was instantly slain once he moved in that direction."

"Even Elder Gods are slain?" Ning frowned.

"Anyone who dares to travel there will be slain. Not even animals or birds are permitted to enter that region." The Chaos Immortal shook his head. "Be careful, fellow Daoist." After speaking, he flew away.

The fur-clad Ji Ning considered this matter, then immediately began to charge downwards. As soon as he touched the ground, he instantly disappeared into thin air.

Using the Shadowless evasion skill, he began to move towards Vastheaven Palace at high speeds. For the sake of hiding his true abilities, Ning merely moved stealthily at just two times the normal speed of light.

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Within Vastheaven Palace.

Ji Ning, Daolord Solesky, and Daolord Battlemaster were standing before their barrier formations, staring off into the distance.

"Big brother, that clone of mine is about to arrive," Ning said.

"In order to break through to the Daolord level, you have to merge all of your clones together to form a complete body." Daolord Solesky shook his head and sighed. "But that madman Patriarch Clearwind has surrounded our palace. It'll be extremely difficult for your clone to make it inside. As I see it, you should just give up that body. You'll still be able to become a Daolord, and your strength will only be minimally impacted."

Ning shook his head. That clone was one of the eighteen clones that had been created thanks to his [Taowu Eighteen Fiendgods]. His 'main body' was actually created from the merging of seventeen of those clones! If it died, his spare clone would be able to recreate the main body by remaking the other seventeen clones.

If the spare clone died, there was no way his main body would be able to rebuild it. Still... once the spare clone died, the main body would become independent and 'complete', but it would have an eighteenth less divine power than its maximum potential. It was true that this wouldn't have a significant impact.

"Just wait a bit, big brother," Ning said.

"Alright." Daolord Solesky laughed. "I'll eagerly await your display of power, Ji Ning."

.....

Ning was flying low, very close to the ground. The sky-blotting tempest of gray wind blanketed all of Vastheaven Palace, with the shrine having descended upon the peak of a nearby mountain. Patriarch Clearwind's Immortal energy filled the entire region, with the area around Vastheaven Palace under his complete control. Any cultivator who wished to enter or exit Vastheaven Palace would not be able to escape his detection.

“Eh?” Patriarch Clearwind opened his eyes. His gaze pierced through the walls of the shrine as he stared towards a distant region. He let out a cold smile. “Ah, a young World-level cultivator. He thinks to evade my surveillance through using an evasion skill?”

“You may perish.”

Patriarch Clearwind coldly waved a single finger.

BOOM!

A terrifying amount of natural energy instantly began to manifest, transforming into a blurry gray hand that was three million kilometers in size and which clawed downwards towards the cultivator.

Whooooosh. The swiping motion of that giant gray blurry hand caused the entire area beneath it to be reduced to dust as an enormous gouge was torn into the earth.

Swish! Ning, however, continued to skirt across the surface of the ground. His speed had suddenly increased to four times the speed of light.

“Eh?” Patriarch Clearwind’s face tightened. “How can a World-level cultivator have such a fast evasion skill? He’s comparable to a Daolord of the Third Step.” When he had swiped out at the ground, Ning had suddenly sped up from twice the speed of light to four times the speed of light, avoiding his blow.

“Hmph.” Patriarch Clearwind had a dark look on his face as he once more launched an attack, a second claw.

That giant blurry gray hand carried even more power than before, and it also moved even faster as it swept out towards the ground. The earth trembled as mud and dirt was reduced to dust as an even larger gouge appeared within the ground.

And yet... Ning’s speed skyrocketed yet again. He now was able to move at six times the speed of light, and as a result he dodged even this second attack. By now, he was very close to Vastheaven Palace.

Swish! Patriarch Clearwind didn’t even have a chance to unleash a third

strike. Ning almost instantly charged within the protective perimeter of Vastheaven Palace.

“What?!” Patriarch Clearwind shot to his feet, causing his seven World-level cultivators under his command to all be shocked. None of them even knew that a World-level cultivator was using an evasion skill; all they knew was that their Patriarch Clearwind had just clawed twice at the ground.

“He actually escaped, and that final burst of speed brought him to move at six times the speed of light? That’s faster than many Verge-level Daolords!” Patriarch Clearwind had a look of disbelief on his face. “How could a World-level cultivator be that fast? What sort of special encounters has he had!?”

If Ning was riding Chaos lightning , he would be able to move at ten times the speed of light. There were actually quite a few similar evasion skills, but they were all extremely difficult to train in. Many Verge-level Daolords didn’t have access to such evasion skills.

“Given his speed... could that have been the Darknorth fellow which Blesswind spoke of?” Patriarch Clearwind mused to himself, “But logically speaking, that World God named Darknorth should’ve reached Vastheaven Palace long ago. Could it be that Vastheaven Palace has a second World-level cultivator who moves at those speeds?”

Patriarch Clearwind was truly mystified.

.....

Vastheaven Palace, however, was a hubbub of celebration.

Swoosh.

The fur-clad Ning charged past the barriers of Vastheaven Palace; in doing so, he had reached a position of perfect safety. He flew straight towards the white-robed Ning, returning to his usual appearance while doing so.

“Impressive, impressive.” Daolord Solesky let out an amazed sigh. “Patriarch Clearwind struck out twice but still wasn’t able to halt your

clone. That evasion skill you used at the very end... it let you move at six times the limits of the Heavenly Daos, right?"

"He was overconfident. He didn't know about my true abilities." Ning chuckled. He had actually been quite relaxed this entire time, and he had only been forced to move at six times the speed of light. His current limit was actually ten! However, he only needed to move as fast as was necessary to escape and safely enter Vastheaven Palace. There was no need for him to let the enemy know everything.

"If you move that fast, it won't be an easy thing for him to kill you," Daolord Battlemaster said.

Ning immediately said, "Big brother Solesky, big brother Battlemaster, now that my clone's arrived I'm going to merge my clone with my main body and break through to become a Daolord."

"Right." Solesky and Battlemaster both turned solemn.

"You must be careful," Solesky instructed. "Breaking through to become a Daolord of the First Step might be easy for you, but given how formidable your sword-intent is you'll definitely become at least a Daolord of the Fourth Step. That makes it even more important for you to solidify your foundation. The Dao you develop must be sufficiently solid and stable."

Ning nodded.

Daolords. With each step they took, they trod the line between life and death.

It was like building a tall building. Becoming a Daolord of the First Step was establishing the foundation for that building! Daolords of the second, third, and fourth steps were like adding more and more floors to that building. If the foundation wasn't stable, the entire building might collapse! The same was true for Samsara Daolords. Each step they took they risked their lives, and quite a few Daolords ended up dying upon taking their third step. Not every Daolord would be able to reach the fourth step.

In order to build a tall tower, the most important thing of all was to have a sturdy base. As for gaining eternity? Not even the slightest error was permissible. Even the smallest of flaws would ensure that you would never be able to gain eternity!

If your foundation was small, you'd only be able to build a small wooden cabin, which was to say you would become an ordinary Daolord. Each step they took would be easier, and it would be easier for them to become Eternal Emperors. However, they would be weak.

If you had an incredibly deep foundation, you would be ready to build a massive palace atop it. Every floor would be quite difficult to construct, and to gain eternity would be even harder. However, if you succeeded you would be unfathomably stronger than your peers. This was true for Bertulu, Eastcult, Greatjoy, and the others. As for Ning, his foundation was the deepest of them all.

"Don't worry at all, big brother." Ning smiled, then both he and his clone both transformed into streaks of light that flew towards his distant estate as Daolord Battlemaster and Daolord Solesky both watched from behind.

"Brother Ji Ning truly has improved by an astonishing amount." Daolord Solesky sighed. "When I first met him... I thought he was quite talented, but I never would've imagined that he would become as powerful as he is today. The evasion skill he used just now was very fast, but it didn't seem to include any of his lightning or water. I have no idea what evasion skill he used, but just by relying on his sword-intent he was able to capture five World-level cultivators."

Daolord Battlemaster nodded as well. "I tried to use Numerancy to divine his future, but I wasn't able to divine anything at all. He's too monstrously talented, even more talented than Brightfish. Calculating his future is far too difficult."

Forget about him; even the Paragon of Pills was only able to use Numerancy to get the vaguest of ideas as to how long it would be before they met again.

Chapter 16: Becoming a Daolord

Vastheaven Palace. The Darknorth Estate.

The white-robed Ji Ning and the fur-clad Ning were travelling side-by-side.

“Master.” Su Youji and Pillsaint stared in astonishment.

“My clone has already returned from the Badlands Territory. It is now time for me to break through to become a Daolord as well,” Ning said. “Starting right now, do not disturb me unless something very important happens.”

“Understood.”

Both Su Youji and Pillsaint immediately acknowledged the order. They were unable to prevent looks of excitement from appearing on their faces. As they saw it, Ji Ning truly was an incredible figure; once he broke through to become a Daolord, his status would truly skyrocket even more.

Whoosh. Whoosh. The white-robed Ning and the fur-clad Ning both moved into a private room deep within the estate.

.....

Within the secluded room.

Rumble...

Formations began to activate, causing barriers of light to begin to appear around the entire Darknorth estate, preventing any outsiders from looking into it.

The white-robed Ning and the fur-clad Ning both sat in the lotus position. Both shut their eyes, then began to use the [One True Body] technique.

Whoosh. Both bodies began to emanate an aura of blurry light from their bodies, their Jindans, and their souls. They began to draw closer and closer to each other, before finally the fur-clad Ning flew straight into the white-robed Ning’s body, causing the light to expand dramatically.

The two came from the same source. They were identical in soul, truesoul, and body. This was why they were able to rejoin each other and merge into one.

"Now, all eighteen of my clones have been brought together into one." The white-robed Ning opened his eyes, revealing a smile. He still remembered how he had first acquired the [Taowu Eighteen Fiendgods] and used it to create eighteen separate clones. Now, he had managed to once more merge all eighteen clones into one! A sense of perfection and contentment came from his very truesoul, causing him to feel a bit intoxicated.

Immortal energy and divine power flooded into the azureflower mist region within his body, and it actually began to transform into more of that mist energy. For eighteen of those bodies to come together meant that his divine body had only become more powerful than it had been in the past! His divine power was also slightly purer than before as well, allowing him to endure and hold a bit more of that mist energy.

"A hundred and twenty drops." He had accumulated a total of 120 drops of 'water' within the azureflower mist region. This was quite a bit more than the 108 drops he had accumulated previously.

.....

Within an estate located in the primordial chaos directly outside the distant Three Realms.

The black-robed Ning was seated there, next to another black-robed Ning. They simultaneously used the [One True Body] technique as well and merged to become one.

A short while later, there was only one seated black-robed Ning. His aura, however, was a bit stronger than before.

From this day forth, he would only have one true body and one Primaltwin, with no clones of either.

.....

"Let it begin." Both the white-robed Ning in Vastheaven Palace and the

black-robed Ning in his chaos estate nodded, their eyes filled with resolve.

Boom!

The true body and the Primaltwin, though located extremely far away from each other, made their breakthroughs simultaneously. They could even sense a strange resonance between them, and in this moment they both established a Dao that belonged to them and them alone.

Samsara Daolords walked a path of their own devising, and with each step on their Dao they trod the line between life and death.

Each time he made a breakthrough, both his true body and his Primaltwin would have to make the breakthrough at the same time! Trying to break through with just one would result in being stifled by the other; there was no way for it to succeed. Consider the ‘Daomerge’; even a Daolord of the Fourth Step who had a Primaltwin would only have one shot at the Daomerge. There was no way to simply allow the true body to fail the Daomerge, then allow the Primaltwin to use that experience to succeed.

The true body and the Primaltwin would have to face it all together, and with each step they would risk death together. This was how things worked. If you weren’t extremely determined, you would never be able to succeed.

Rumble...

The primordial chaos outside the Three Realms began to rumble and churn with unearthly power, forming a chaos whirlpool of terrifying power and inconceivable size. The ripples caused by it actually affected even the insides of the Three Realms!

“W-what...”

“What in the world?”

“What are these terrifying ripples?”

Patriarch Subhuti, Windfiend, and the other elites of the Three Realms all flew to the void above the Three Realms. They stared towards the

distant place where the ripples were coming from. They could sense that the normally calm and tranquil primordial chaos was now rumbling and roaring like a dragon in flight, churning with such power that they were all utterly amazed.

.....

Vastheaven Palace. The Darknorth Estate was completely calm.

Although a Daolord's aura was bursting forth from this place, the barriers which Ning had activated earlier made it so that the aura was completely blocked from escaping. As for the energy which he needed to break through from the World level to the Daolord level, Ning was able to simply generate it from the chaos jewels which he carried with him. This was a decision he had made ever since he comprehended his Omega Sword Dao.

Whoooosh.

The Jindan chaos region within his body. The Dao-tree which had been 108,000 meters tall began to draw nourishment from Ning's insights into his Sword Dao. It quickly began to grow, and with a rumbling sound it started to expand. Although it was very slow in growing 'taller', it was beginning to thicken at an absolutely incredible speed.

The Dao-tree was growing thicker and thicker, but it was growing taller quite slowly.

"The deeper a Samsara Daolord's foundation is, the thicker his Dao-tree will be. Thanks to my Omega Sword Dao, there should be very few Daolords of the First Step who are a match for me," Ning mused. There was a fixed limit to how tall a Dao-tree could be. For example, if a Daolord of the Fourth Step trained for many years and reached the Verge, his Dao-tree would grow to become 540,000 meters tall. This was true for all Verge-level Daolords. The thickness, however, was different for each person.

As the Dao-tree grew thicker and taller, the roots would also extend deeper and deeper into the Jindan chaos region, allowing it to become more and more stable and expand even further in size.

The Dao-tree continued to grow until it reached a height of 156,000 meters tall, then finally came to a halt.

The Jindan chaos region, however, was still furiously expanding. Its aura was expanding as well, and the Jindan core at the very heart of the region was becoming increasingly mysterious and profound.

“Time to rebuild the divine body.”

The white-robed Ning sat there in the lotus position. His bones, his flesh, his sinews... they all began to be fundamentally remade and rebuilt, using the Omega Sword Dao as their core. They drew in the chaos energy, using it to remake his divine power itself. His awesome Daolord aura burst forth from his room, and the many chaos jewels in Ning’s possession were being continuously used up and replenished. In truth, not even a Daolord of the Fourth Step would really use up that many chaos jewel in replenishing his divine power. To Ning, such a small amount of chaos jewels was negligible.

.....

“A Daolord’s aura. Master is making his breakthrough.” Pillsaint was nervous.

“Right, but the aura is so powerful... it is far greater than the aura we had when we made our breakthroughs.” Su Youji was quite moved, but a puzzled look appeared in her eyes as she raised her head skywards. “Odd. Why isn’t there any disturbance in the local primordial chaos?”

Pillsaint revealed a puzzled look as well. “Right. Is Master not using the chaos energy of the outside world?”

Only when breaking through would you be able to absorb an enormous amount of chaos energy in a very short period of time for ‘free’. When you normally broke through to become a Daolord, you would make use of that free chaos energy from the outside world. Ning, however, was so filthy rich that he didn’t care about that at all, and he had his own reasons for not wishing to draw upon the chaos energy of the outside world.

“Master probably has other things on his mind,” Su Youji suggested.

.....

Just two hours later, the true body had completed its breakthrough. Given that he had an unlimited supply of chaos jewels, the breakthrough was naturally incredibly fast. As for the Primaltwin, its breakthrough would take significantly more time, as it was still furiously drawing upon the energy of the primordial chaos outside of the Three Realms.

“So this is what it is like to become a Daolord?” The white-robed Ning sat there, a smile on his face. His aura was noticeably much more powerful than it had been in the past, and it was actually on par with that of Daolord Brightfish, a Daolord of the Second Step.

Anyone who saw Ning and sensed his aura would judge him to be a Daolord of the Second Step.

In truth, this actually wasn’t that impressive. All Ancient cultivators and members of the Brightshore Imperials were comparable to Daolords of the First Step when they were actually at the World level. Once they broke through, their divine bodies would be comparable to Daolords of the Third Step, and their auras would be far stronger than Ning’s! As for Kilostar, who had trained in the [Thousand Bodies Sutra], he would be every bit a match for those Ancient cultivators and the Brightshore Imperials.

However, there were very, very few Ancient cultivators and Brightshore Imperials. As for cultivators who both trained in the [Thousand Bodies Sutra] and were able to break through to become Daolords? They were probably even rarer than Brightshore Imperials!

Thus, in the outside world people usually judged a person’s power based on his aura.

Ning used his Omega Sword Dao to serve as the basis and core of his divine power, and had combined eighteen bodies into one; this was why he had a body comparable to a Daolord of the Second Step after making his breakthrough.

“In the future, I’ll just pretend to be a Daolord of the Second Step. In the end, my Omega Sword Dao is simply too powerful, far more powerful than the Daos of Eastcult, Greatjoy, or the others. Based on what I know, not

even figures like the almighty Brightshore Hegemon or the Paragon of Pills have encountered World-level cultivators who had as unearthly a Dao as I do."

Ning knew that in everyone's eyes, being able to master and then join together multiple Supreme Daos meant that you were the most supreme of geniuses. And yet... he was even more powerful than the 'most supreme of geniuses'?

If others found out about this, there might be some benefits for him, but... it would also bring quite a deal of trouble! It was better to be cautious; on the surface, being just one of those other 'supreme geniuses' was enough.

After making his breakthrough, Ning could sense that he had undergone an earthshaking transformation. He felt certain that thanks to his Omega Sword Dao, even as a Daolord of the First Step he would be comparable to the likes of Greatjoy and Eastcult once they became Daolords of the Second Step. There were very few Daolords of the Fourth Step who could do anything to him! This made Ning feel a sense of uncontrollable heroism and valor.

In the past, any powerful Daolord could pose a threat to him. Now... he would pose a threat to them instead!

Chapter 17: Leaving Seclusion

The secluded room was completely silent. Ji Ning simply sat there, visualizing the insides of his body.

His reserves of Immortal energy and divine power were as deep as those of a Daolord of the Second Step. Ning's focus, however, was on the azureflower region within his body.

"The azureflower mist energy." This was what Ning was looking at. The azureflower region was a mist of haze. Droplets of golden water were slowly rolling together as the area emanated an aura of fog and mist. There was a total of 1111 of those golden drops! Every single drop contained far more energy than Ning's divine power and Immortal energy combined.

"It actually evolved once again. My azureflower mist energy is far stronger than my own divine power or Immortal energy. How could it be this much stronger? This should be the power of a Daolord of the Fourth Step!" Ning was truly stunned.

The Nine Chaos Seals seemed like a very ordinary technique, but it was actually inconceivably strong.

For it to be able to convert the energy of Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals was one thing. Even the conversion of World-level energy... fine. But it was actually able to convert even Daolord-level energy?! To this very day, Ning still wasn't able to grasp some of the mysteries behind the conversion process.

"Who? Who created this technique, this ridiculously powerful technique? The deceased Hegemon bestowed numerous techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts upon me as well, but none of them can compare to it!" Ning was secretly stunned. Aside from his Hegemon-level sword-arts, the deceased Sword Hegemon also had numerous divine abilities and secret arts which he had passed on to Ning, and some of them were even stronger than the [Novessence Thunder]. And yet... they were all vastly inferior compared to the Nine Chaos Seals.

"The legends say that the most powerful bodies are those of the

Brightshore Imperials, certain top-tier Aberrants, Ancient cultivators, and cultivators who trained in the [Thousand Bodies Sutra]," Ning mused. "But my Nine Chaos Seals allows me to be on par with them."

Brightshore Imperials, Ancient cultivators, elite Aberrants, and practitioners of the [Thousand Bodies Sutra] were all incredibly talented figures; even at the World level, their bodies were comparable to the bodies of Daolords. Once they broke through to become Daolords of the First Step, their bodies would be comparable to those of Daolords of the Third Step!

Most importantly of all, they were able to execute divine abilities and unleash utterly ruinous amounts of force that were probably stronger than even Ning's azureflower mist energy. There was no way for Ning to use his azureflower mist energy to use any divine abilities at all.

The problem was there were pitifully few Brightshore Imperials. This was why they needed the Twelve Palaces to protect them!

Ancient cultivators, top-tier Aberrants, practitioners of the [Thousand Bodies Sutra]... all of them were pitifully few in number.

Daolord Solesky, Daolord Battlemaster, Daolord Brightfish, Pillsaint, Su Youji... when they were at the first step, they would have auras of Daolords of the First Step. Once they took their second step, they would have auras of Daolords of the Second Step. This was normal! People like Ning, who had an Omega Sword Dao and eighteen clones, were incredibly rare even amongst Daolords.

"Ancient cultivators and Brightshore Imperials who are Daolords of the First Step might be able to surpass me in power when they fully unleash all of their abilities, but I'm capable of lasting much longer in combat. In addition, the higher a level you reach, the more important the strength of the Dao you have created is." Ning nodded slowly.

For Samsara Daolords, their Dao was their foundation. It mattered most of all.

Ning, for example, was in control of an Omega Sword Dao. Even without using any divine abilities or techniques, his sword-intent alone would be

enough to easily suppress Daolords of the third Step. Thanks to this Omega Dao, he would be able to move ten times the speed of light. His Omega Dao allowed him to enter higher dimensions and move through them at truly astonishing speeds.

This was the nature of the Dao.

If you simply relied on brute force and strength, the end result would be that you would be trampled. This was why certain incredibly powerful Daolords were able to easily slay Brightshore Imperials, Ancient cultivators, and even Eternal Emperors, even though they were nothing more than ‘ordinary’ cultivators without any particularly special bodies!

“The Dao of the Sword...”

Ning was using his Omega Sword Dao to serve as the template for remaking his divine body. Once his Dao-tree stabilized, he was immediately able to vaguely visualize the upcoming path for his Omega Sword Dao.

The higher you stood, the farther you would be able to see.

Many different Sword Daos filled his mind, as did his Heavenbreaker sword-intent, his Soleheart sword-intent, his Yin-Yang sword-intent, his Blood Drop sword-intent, and his Shadowless sword-intent. Ning was beginning to get some insights and ideas into the mysteries they would hold in the future.

“No wonder they all say that going from the first step to the second step as a Daolord is the easiest step.” Ning revealed a smile. “If I was merely in control a single Supreme Dao, I’d probably break through to become a Daolord of the Second Step in just a few hundred years.”

It was very quick for Daolords to go from the first step to the second step. Even the absolute slowest of Daolords would at most take a few chaos cycles, and this would already be considered an incredibly long period of time. According to the stories, there were some who would be able to much move faster, breaking through within a thousand years. However, the later steps would be much more difficult and breaking through would be much slower.

"However, I need to first make further breakthroughs in my five Supreme Daos. Only then will I be able to develop an even more profound Omega Sword Dao." Ning understood that his path would be a more difficult one. Others, however, would have no idea.

"I'll stay in seclusion for ten years. Ten years from now I'll say that I broke through to become a Daolord of the Second Step," Ning mused.

Ten years. Under temporal acceleration, this would translate into over a thousand years. Given Ning's level of talent, for him to break through to become a Daolord of the Second Step in roughly a thousand years wouldn't be that surprising to others.

As a Daolord of the Second Step, for him to possess a Dao on the level of his Omega Sword Dao would make sense. If others knew that a Daolord of the First Step possessed such a terrifyingly powerful Sword Dao, news would quickly spread throughout the Endless Territories. Ning truly didn't want to see this happen.

"In the next ten years, I need to finish mastering the [Novessence Thunder] and the [Novessence Water], as well as the protective divine ability the deceased Hegemon gave me, the [Sword Dao Body]." Ning came to his decision. Of the various divine abilities and secret arts which the deceased Hegemon had given him, the only one he could use for now was the protective divine ability.

This was because Ning had already reached the apex of power in the [Golden Idol] technique, and his body was comparable to a supreme Dao weapon. That was the highest limit possible for World-level cultivators. Only now, after becoming a Daolord, was he able to use the deceased Hegemon's [Sword Dao Body]. When trained to the apex, it would make his divine body comparable to a supreme Eternal treasure.

Given his life would be a life surrounded by battle, if he wished to live a long life he had to be able to take a beating!

The primordial chaos was filled with all types of dangers, and one's enemies were capable of all sorts of insidious attacks. If your divine body was able to take a beating, your chances of staying alive would improve

dramatically. All Daolords of the Fourth Step had extremely powerful and unfathomable techniques. These were terrifying powers gained after your personal Dao had reached an extremely high level.

.....

Time continued to flow on, and twelve years passed in the blink of an eye.

The Darknorth Estate. Although Pillsaint and Su Youji continued to train with their main bodies, both left incarnations there to await Ning's return.

"It's been quite some time since Master became a Daolord. Why hasn't he come out?" Pillsaint was quite puzzled. "It's been twelve years. Even Daolord Solesky has come to ask about this, but all the two of us can do is wait here like fools. Twelve years!"

"Twelve years is nothing. Your true body is using the temporal acceleration treasure inside the estate to train, right?" Su Youji said, "Even if it takes a thousand years or ten thousand years, you have no choice but to wait."

"I know, I know. I'm just mumbling to myself," Pillsaint said hurriedly. "Generally speaking, people will quickly emerge from secluded meditation after becoming Daolords. Our master has been in seclusion for far too long."

"True." Su Youji nodded. "It has been quite a while."

Suddenly...

BOOM!

An utterly terrifying Sword Dao aura suddenly surged outwards. However, the restrictive spells surrounding the Darknorth Estate prevented it from leaving the estate, making it impossible for anyone outside to notice what was going on. This Sword Dao aura was so lofty, exalted, and fierce, both Su Youji and Pillsaint couldn't help but quiver upon sensing it. Faced with this aura, they couldn't even think about resisting it; the only thing they felt was fear.

“This Sword Dao... this Sword Dao...” Both of them were completely shocked.

A period of time went past, but they remained unable to calm down. Rumble... the doors to the room swung open, and a white-robed youth who carried a black sword scabbard on his back emerged from within.

“Master.” Both immediately rose to their feet.

“Master, you...” Su Youji stared at Ning and the aura around him. It seemed rather different from that of most Daolords of the First Step.

“After I became a Daolord, I suddenly gained many new insights and so I chose to train for a period of time. Who would’ve thought that I’d break through and become a Daolord of the Second Step?” Ning said.

“A Daolord of the Second Step?” Both Su Youji and Pillsaint were quite astonished.

Ning, however, felt a bit ashamed. Since he chose to hide his true power, he had to hide it from everyone; only then would he be secure. Ning’s subconscious had whispered to him repeatedly that pretending to be a Daolord of the Second Step was the best choice; only then would his path of cultivation be a safe one.

“Master... I’ve heard many say that advancing from the first step to the second step is quite fast, with some succeeding in just a thousand years, but I didn’t imagine you would be that fast as well.” Su Youji said excitedly, “Master, you truly are incredible.”

“Alright. No need to tell others about this,” Ning said. He then raised his head to stare towards the skies. With but a thought, he dispelled the formation spells surrounding the Darknorth Estate. As soon as he did so, both Daolord Solesky and Daolord Battlemaster sensed it right away.

“Ah, Ji Ning! Congratulations on making your breakthrough.” A wave of godsense swept towards him, bringing a mental chuckle with it. “Oho, this aura of yours... have you become a Daolord of the Second Step?”

Chapter 18: The Power to Roam the Endless Territories

Just a short while later, Daolords Solesky, Battlemaster, and Brightfish all arrived at the Darknorth Estate. They stared at Ji Ning in astonishment.

"What's with the looks on your faces?" Ning immediately asked.

"To advance from being a Daolord of the First Step to a Daolord of the Second Step within a thousand years... we've only heard of such things in legends." Daolord Solesky beamed merrily as he looked at Ning. "But today, I've witnessed it myself. See that, Brightfish? That's what a true 'genius' is."

Daolord Brightfish looked at Ning, then nodded and grunted in assent.

Ning raised his head staring at the dark gray wind which was blotting out the skies above them. "Big brother Solesky, what are Patriarch Clearwind's strengths and weaknesses? You've been feuding against him for ages; you should know better than anyone else. Please tell me everything you know."

"His strengths and weaknesses?" Daolord Solesky looked at Ning, puzzled. "What are you planning to do?"

Ning's copy of the Brightshore Kingdom's star map had information regarding the Daolords in each territory, and it also had fairly detailed information on Patriarch Clearwind. Based on that information, Ning felt confident that he could give Patriarch Clearwind a run for his money! However, Daolord Solesky had been battling Patriarch Clearwind for so long that he probably had far more information than the star map did.

This was going to be a big battle. He had to prepare for it as best as he could.

"You..." The nearby Daolord Battlemaster first frowned, then stared towards Ning in shock. "You are preparing to give Patriarch Clearwind a fight?"

“What?!” Brightfish, Solesky, and even Pillsaint and Su Youji were both shocked as well.

Ning gave Daolord Battlemaster a surprised glance, then nodded. “Big brother Battlemaster’s Numerancy skills truly are formidable. Indeed. I’ve become much more powerful and wish to test myself against Patriarch Clearwind.”

“B-but you are just a new Daolord of the Second Step.” Daolord Solesky grew nervous. “How could you be so rash as to challenge Clearwind? He’s every bit a match for me. Even though Battlemaster is also at the fourth step, he’s still a level weaker than Patriarch Clearwind. Do you think you are invincible, now that you have broken through from the World level to become a Daolord of the Second Step? Ji Ning, I don’t want to criticize you, but you have to be cautious when roaming the Endless Territories. If you act this rashly, you will probably die.”

Daolord Solesky really was panicking. Had his brother gone mad?

“Big brother.” Ning didn’t try to argue with him. “Receive a blow from me.”

“Eh?” Daolord Solesky looked at Ning, then nodded. “Very well. Strike with your full power. I want to see how strong you are.”

Whoosh. Ning suddenly disappeared into thin air. Daolord Solesky had been quite calm, but now his face turned pale.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Sword-shadows formed from finger-strikes suddenly appeared everywhere and stabbed towards Daolord Solesky, every single one of them moving with incomprehensible speed.

“Fast. Too fast! H-how...” Daolord Solesky’s hands instantly transformed into two streams of water that swirled around each other, completely covering the area around him as they strove to defend against Ning’s sword-shadows. Despite that, Daolord Solesky was rendered completely off-balance and forced to take on the attacks head-on, causing waves and splashes of water to explode around him. This caused the nearby Daolord Battlemaster and Daolord Brightfish to both feel tremendous shock.

Whoosh.

Ning's form appeared once more standing off in the distance.

"How was it, big brother?" Ning looked at Daolord Solesky.

"Well done, my brother!" Daolord Solesky revealed a look of delight, his eyes radiating excitement as he stared at Ning. He roared with laughter, "Well done, my brother! With this stance alone, you have the power to roam the Endless Territories unimpeded. How could you be this fast? In fact, you seem to be even faster in battle!"

"It is due to the Dao which I comprehended," Ning said.

Ning was able to move at ten times the speed of light. Other Daolords who used flying treasures or rode on lightning or light would also be able to move at ten times the speed of light, but there was a critical difference; for them, that speed could only be obtained when they were fleeing at high speed! The speed at which they could move and dodge in confined spaces in close quarters combat was much slower. Ning, however, had launched more than sixty thousand frenzied attacks within this region in that brief moment... and he was actually able to move and dodge at the incredible speed of ten times the speed of light in battle!

This wasn't a speed one could reach thanks to treasures or external resources. It depended on the Dao you had comprehended.

Some who trained in the Dao of Lightning, the Dao of Wind, or the Dao of Light would be able to move dozens of times faster than the speed of light once they became Daolords of the Fourth Step! This was what made them so incredibly formidable in battle. But of course, people like them were incredibly rare; less than one in a hundred Daolords of the Fourth Step would have such skills. But of course, the other Daolords might be skilled in other areas.

"Formidable." Daolord Solesky was extremely impressed.

"Our big brother is right. By relying on this Sword Dao, Darknorth, you do indeed have the power to roam the Endless Territories." Daolord Battlemaster nodded in praise as well.

“Incredible.” Daolord Brightfish sighed in amazement.

Solesky immediately asked, “Right, Ji Ning. When you were in the Sword Palace of the Brightshore Kingdom, you should’ve been given the title of ‘Swordlord’, right?”

“Yes.” Ning nodded.

“My master became a Swordlord shortly after he entered the Sword Palace. He was one of the top-ranking ones in the Twelve Palaces, at that.” Pillsaint immediately spoke up proudly.

“Hah! The Brightshore Kingdom is one of the six major powers. You’ve only been training for a short period of time, yet you managed to rank amongst the top World-level cultivators of the Brightshore Kingdom? No wonder you are such a monster despite having just reached the second step.” Daolord Solesky nodded. “You might be a bit weaker than Patriarch Clearwind, but your speed alone guarantees that he won’t be able to take you down.”

As he spoke, he produced a jade slip and immediately sent it towards Ning. “Clearwind and I have battling for ages, and I know the ins and outs of virtually all his techniques. I’ve recorded them all down within this jade slip. Take a look!”

Ning accepted it, then immediately began to read through it carefully.

Right. This information was indeed more detailed than the information included within the Brightshore Kingdom’s star map. Patriarch Clearwind truly was formidable.

“What do you think?” Daolord Solesky looked at Ning. “Still want to fight him?”

“Of course I’m going to fight him.” Ning nodded. “We can’t just let him continue to blockade the entrance of our Vastheaven Palace, right?”

“Good!” Daolord Solesky smiled. “Now that you are a Daolord, you are the fourth Palace Lord of Vastheaven Palace. This here is one of the central control mechanisms for our barriers and restrictive spells. If you aren’t able to overcome your foe, you can retreat within the palace.”

As he spoke, he handed over a black-gold sawtoothed disc which was covered in complicated divine runes. This thing was part of the core controls of the entire Vastheaven Palace!"

"These core controls can only be bound a single time," Daolord Solesky said. "After you bind them, they can never be bound by others again." This was for security reasons. If one of the Palace Lords of Vastheaven Palace died and their opponent managed to take over and bind the core controls... unacceptable! This place had been the headquarters for Vastheaven Palace for countless ages, after all.

After binding the disc, Ning could sense the many complicated and powerful formations covering all of Vastheaven Palace. Their power was indeed astonishing.

"Then I'll head off." Ning glanced at the others, then transformed into a streak of light that flew away.

"Be careful!" Solesky called out from behind.

Daolords Brightfish, Battlemaster, Pillsaint, and Su Youji all watched nervously.

"Big brother Battlemaster, Darknorth won't be in any danger, will he?" Daolord Brightfish asked nervously.

"Overall, he probably isn't a match for Clearwind. But he's a sword cultivator! They are very skilled in battle..." Battlemaster paused.

"He might not be able to beat Clearwind, but he'll definitely be able to keep himself safe. Let him have his fight," Solesky said with a smile.

"Will he be able to win?" Su Youji couldn't help but ask this question.

"It'll be hard. Actually, there's almost no chance of him winning." Solesky shook his head.

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The fierce gray tempest continued to blot out the skies and the sun, causing the entire Vastheaven Palace to be cast in stifling darkness. A streak of light, however, rose up from within Vastheaven Palace. It flew

out of the barrier spells, then came to a halt in midair. It was a white-robed youth who was carrying a black sheath on his back.

“Clearwind!” Ning barked out, his voice echoing and reverberating in the air, causing innumerable sword-shadows to appear.

The trillions of sword-shadows all simultaneously shot out towards the distant shrine. When the sword-shadows collided against the blurry gray storm, a series of eruptions could be heard. The blurry gray wind began to splinter and break apart, as did many of the sword-shadows. However, more and more of the sword-shadows were born as they continued to press the attack.

As for the blurry gray wind, it also continued to be remade and surge out as well. The wind was an external manifestation of Patriarch Clearwind’s Dao, while Ning’s sword-shadows were external manifestations of his own Omega Sword Dao.

The two Daos began to clash against each other, harder and harder.

“Eh?” This entire time, the man dressed in handsome black robes had been seated within the shrine, his eyes closed. He suddenly rose to his feet and then walked to the entrance of the shrine, where he stared downwards at the white-robed figure in midair, ensconced by those countless sword-shadows.

“So you are Darknorth?” Patriarch Clearwind immediately recognized the man.

“I am,” Ning replied.

Patriarch Clearwind said, “A Daolord of the Second Step already? Or were you just pretending to be at the World level earlier? Hmph. I will admit that your Sword Dao is extraordinary, and it’s impressive that a weak Daolord of the Second Step like you could have such an incredible Sword Dao. If you choose to pit yourself against me, however... then you truly are overestimating your capabilities.”

“Let’s cut the crap. Eat my sword!” The distant Ning let out a furious bellow. Clang! A Northbow sword immediately flew out from the black

scabbard on his back.

Chapter 19: Battling Patriarch Clearwind

Ensconced by trillions of sword-shadows, the mid-air Ji Ning manifested three heads and six arms, with each of his six hands gripping that single Northbow sword.

“Kill!” Ning raised his Northbow sword up high, the swords emanating auras of incomparable dominance and power. He then unleashed a single furious chop directly towards his opponent.

It was like the Northbow sword was cutting an utterly massive yet extremely neat chasm through space. Sword-light immediately filled those chasm, almost instantly chopping directly towards Patriarch Clearwind. The power of this strike suddenly exploded, as though it a volcano that had been building towards an eruption suddenly erupted in an instant.

Ning was using his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker! The Omega Sword Dao could be gentle or savage, insidious or dominating. It was all up to his personal decision. Once the many mysteries of the Dao of the Sword were truly merged together, they instantly exploded in power.

Ning had chosen to fight head on with his first strike, which was why he had merely used a single sword. For such a wild, furious strike, a single sword was actually better. The deceased Hegemon himself had used that single dark blue greatsword! This was because when the power of six arms were completely focused upon a single sword, it would give that sword even more dominating power.

“Hmph.” Patriarch Clearwind remained as calm and unflappable as the winds. He simply narrowed his eyes and snorted, then produced a seemingly slender yet incredibly sharp longsword in his hands. He didn’t understand much regarding the Dao of the Sword, but to him using swords or sabers really didn’t make much of a difference. The slenderness and incredible sharpness of this sword was just highly suited to his own Dao.

“Scram!” Patriarch Clearwind struck out with the longsword in his hands. If one strictly viewed this from the standpoint of the Dao of the

Sword, this truly was a rather unsightly stance. But when the longsword in his hands struck out, it instantly began to roar like an endless tempest howling angrily through the lands.

The volcanic eruption from the Northbow sword clashed against the howling, gale-like slender sword. Two surges of terrifying, earth-rending power collided together.

“What?!” Patriarch Clearwind revealed a shocked look. He had actually been knocked backwards by that attack!

An utterly terrifying shockwave spread out in every direction, and space itself rippled as though a black wave had spread across its watery surface. Mountain ranges were instantly reduced to dust, while Vastheaven Palace’s barriers managed to withstand this shockwave. As for Patriarch Clearwind’s shrine, it was actually sent tumbling through the air, and the seven World-level cultivators within it were all filled with horror.

“Master!”

“Patriarch!”

They all stared nervously towards the outside world.

Ning had taken just a single step backwards, while Patriarch Clearwind had been knocked flying. However, the latter quickly found his footing, then turned to stare icily towards Ning. This was the first time he truly viewed Ning as a worthy opponent. “What a dominating Sword Dao. I never would’ve imagined that a Daolord of the Second Step would be able to threaten me.”

Patriarch Clearwind was truly stunned. Although he had delivered just a casual blow, it was still a blow from a Daolord of the Fourth Step. How was it that he had actually lost that exchange?

“You aren’t bad either,” Ning snorted coldly.

“Excellent. Receive another blow from my sword, then.” Patriarch Clearwind’s body transformed, becoming as blurry as the wind as the slender sword in his hand struck out again, once more bringing that terrifying, enraged stormy howl.

As for Ning, he once more valiant and confidently gripped his sword with all six hands, moving forward to welcome the blow head on.

BOOM!

This frontal collision caused a shockwave that was even more terrifying than the previous one, but this time the one knocked backwards was Ji Ning.

“As expected, he’s stronger than me in a frontal clash.” Ning’s face tightened slightly as he was sent flying backwards, and he was only able to come to a halt just before crashing into the barriers around Vastheaven Palace. “However... this strike is roughly on the same technical level as the one that came before it; it was just several times stronger. He probably used some sort of a divine ability.”

Ning’s azureflower mist energy gave him the energy level of a Daolord of the Fourth Step, but he wasn’t able to use any divine abilities. Now that his opponent was, he was at an immediate disadvantage! This was one of the problems of fighting those who were at a higher level than you. Fortunately, Ning was using a lifeblood weapon; otherwise, he would’ve lost even more disastrously. Ever since he had used his Omega Sword Dao to reform the quintessence cores inside his lifeblood weapons, they had grown significantly more powerful.

“You actually managed to block. Hmph.” Patriarch Clearwind’s face tightened slightly as he narrowed his eyes, then leapt forwards to charge towards Ning once more.

“Haha, is this really all you have?” Ning laughed loudly as five more swords came flying out from the scabbard on his back, landing in his other five hands.

Six hands, six swords. All six were lifeblood weapons!

“Let’s fight.” Ning stood there in the air, instantly charging to appear in front of Patriarch Clearwind.

“Die.” Patriarch Clearwind chopped out with the slender sword in his hands, his stances sometimes soft but sometimes ferocious. At all times, it

embodied the essence of the wind itself, and it possessed truly incredible power.

Ning, however, had six swords and many different stances available. Some were extremely inscrutable and mysterious, while others seemed to form terrifying black holes that had folded layers of terrifying spatial power. Previously, Ning had to use all six swords together to achieve this effect with his Soleheart stance, but now that he had his Omega Sword Dao he was able to infuse all of those mysteries with but a single sword. It looked like a black hole, but it also seemed to contain some of the mysteries of the Shadowless stance, the Heavenbreaker stance, and other stances.

It was a battle of six swords against one, and Ning's sword-arts truly were frightening. For now, Patriarch Clearwind was unable to do anything to Ning.

"You are quite impressive. For you to be able to force me to show my divine abilities... you should feel proud of yourself." Patriarch Clearwind let out a cold snort, then instantly manifested a total of six arms as well as five slender swords.

Six arms, six swords. Once more, he charged straight towards Ning.

"Not good." Ning's defenses were breached in a single exchange. The enemy's attack was simply too overwhelming. This man was clearly quite a bit stronger than him.

"It seems I really can't just fight against him head-on." Ning now understand the difference in power between the two of them. Earlier, he used all six arms to wield a single sword while using his most physically powerful strike, but he had still been overcome. With this foe now using six swords as well... there was no way he could win in a head-on fight.

Swoosh.

Ning suddenly vanished into thin air.

"Eh?!" Patriarch Clearwind was momentarily stunned. His white eyebrows shot up in surprise as he swept the area with both his gaze and

his godsense, only to discover that someone was circling him at absolutely terrifying speeds.

Sword-light shone once more. Clang! Patriarch Clearwind immediately moved to dodge.

Moments later, hundreds and thousands of streaks of sword-light began to light up. Ning struck simply far too fast, and his dodging speed was incredibly fast as well, so fast that there was nothing Patriarch Clearwind could do. If your advantage in combat speed and agility reached a point where you were dramatically superior to your opponent, you could attack your opponent freely without your opponent being able to fight back.

"How can he be this fast? How can he be this fast in actual combat?!" Patriarch Clearwind was completely stunned.

To be able to move at ten times the speed of light in combat was extremely rare. He never would've imagined meeting someone capable of it who was merely a Daolord of the Second Step.

"Where the hell did this freak come from? He must be one of those freaks who has mastered and joined together multiple Supreme Daos... and his Daos must be as freakishly strong as he himself is!" For the first time, Patriarch Clearwind was beginning to view Ning as a true equal, not just as a worthy opponent.

"Darknorth!" Surrounded by Ning's attacks, Patriarch Clearwind used his six arms to defend in an almost whirlwind-like manner. He called out in a cold and deep voice, "You are indeed a worthy opponent for me. Unfortunately... in the end, you are just a Daolord of the Second Step. Have a taste of my [Six Winds] secret art!"

As his voice echoed in the skies...

Rumble...

Patriarch Clearwind's long, handsome black robes began to flutter as a series of gales sprang up. There were six types of wind; azure wind, red wind, blue wind, violet wind, white wind, and black wind. The six furious gales immediately began to erupt after appearing, filling the skies as they

swept towards Ning. As Patriarch Clearwind saw it, even if he was unable to kill Ning, he'd still be able to shut him down and make it so that he wouldn't be able to move so quickly.

Seeing this, Ning came to a halt in midair. "Clearwind, parlor tricks like this really won't cut it." Ning's body instantly began to emit streaks of electric light. The lightning was dark-gold in color, so dark as to be almost black with just a few flickers of gold within. At the same time, he also unleashed a turgid stream of water that was completely icy-white in color. As soon as it appeared, it emanated an aura of coldness that caused even space itself to freeze.

Septessence thunder, and septessence water!

Ning's azureflower mist energy was already comparable to the energy of a Daolord of the Fourth Step, and he also had the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] to study from. It had been fairly easy for him to master the septessence thunder and the septessence water techniques.

"Go!" Ning's gaze turned cold as the dark-golden lightning thundered downwards apocalyptically and the infinitely cold stream of water froze all within its path. Even worse, they swirled and coiled about each other, forming an utterly terrifying and enormous vortex-world. This was the power of the Yin-Yang Sword Domain of Ning's new Omega Sword Dao when used in the form of a lightning-water domain. It was at least ten times stronger than merely using septessence thunder and septessence water normally.

The dark lightning-water domain seemed to be capable of breaking apart everything within its range. As soon as it clashed against the six types of wind, the six types of wind emanated terrifying howls of rage as it began to splinter apart. Clearly, it was actually weaker!

"What?!" Patriarch Clearwind's face finally turned pale.

Within Vastheaven Palace.

Daolords Solesky, Battlemaster, Brightfish, Pillsaint, and Su Youji had been watching this entire time. All of them were stunned as well.

This battle involved utterly ruinous levels of power, and both sides were using nearly apocalyptic techniques. Patriarch Clearwind had long been a famous figure. Who would've thought that Ji Ning would actually be able to fight him to a standstill?!

"Darknorth's lightning-water sword domain was actually able to break apart that madman's [Six Winds] secret art." Daolord Solesky sighed in amazement. "Oh, this is really, really impressive. I thought that he would definitely be at a disadvantage in this fight, and would have to rely on his speed to keep himself alive. Now, it seems as though the difference in combat power between the two of them isn't that great, and he even has an advantage in terms of secret arts. It won't be easy for that madman to win this fight. He'll probably have to unleash his desperation attacks if he wants to win."

"He's actually able to fight Clearwind to a standstill." Daolord Battlemaster sighed in amazement as well.

"Master." Su Youji's eyes were shining with excitement as she watched this fight.

Chapter 20: The Hegemon's Armor

A terrifying vortex-world of lightning and water filled the skies, emanating an aura of absolute annihilation as it swirled around Patriarch Clearwind.

"How could his secret arts be this strong? He's merely a Daolord of the Second Step. What type of unearthly, shocking legacy did he manage to uncover?" Patriarch Clearwind was truly stunned. His divine body began to turn blurry as gusts of wind began to swirl around him, striving to ablate the crushing power of the septessence thunder and septessence water.

"Kill!" Ning transformed into a streak of light as he once more charged towards Patriarch Clearwind.

"Hmph. You think a minor secret art like that is enough to deal with me?" Patriarch Clearwind let out an angry roar. Although he was being suppressed by the water-lightning domain, the furious winds surrounding him made it so that the lightning and water found it difficult to actually strike against him.

Given Patriarch Clearwind's power, most likely only the full novessence thunder and novessence water would be enough to injure him. But of course, Ning had never planned on using his sword-intent domain alone to injure his foe. What he wanted to do was to use it to suppress and bind his foe, making his foe slower and allowing himself to further maximize his advantage in speed.

"Die." Ning stood there within the awesome domain of lightning and water... then suddenly vanished without a trace.

One streak after another of terrifying sword-light began to appear and attack Patriarch Clearwind. Some of the sword-light possessed terrifying penetrative powers, some were unfathomable and mysterious. Given that Ning already had an absolute advantage in terms of speed, for a time Patriarch Clearwind found himself stifled quite miserably. All he could do was rely on his six arms to defend as best as he could.

“You young brat!” Patriarch Clearwind’s eyes suddenly shone with azure light, and the power of the howling gale surrounding him instantly increased, making it so that the lightning and the water were completely unable to penetrate his defenses.

“Not good.” Daolord Battlemaster, watching from within the distant Vastheaven Palace, couldn’t help but narrow his eyes.

“The madman’s starting to use his killer attacks.” Daolord Solesky had a solemn look on his face as well. “Brother Ji Ning was able to force this madman into using this attack far sooner than I had expected. Still... brother Ji Ning is incredibly fast. If he chooses to retreat, there’s nothing which Clearwind can do to him. Clearwind can’t maintain his berserk state forever; it uses up far too much divine power.”

“Master isn’t retreating?!” Su Youji was panicking.

“Ah?!” Daolord Brightfish and Daolord Battlemaster began to panic as well.

“That jade slip I gave him contained detailed information on Clearwind’s killer attack. He should’ve been able to recognize it right away!” Daolord Solesky was frantic as well. The battle in the heavens between these two mighty figures was absolutely terrifying; his avatar alone would not be able to make it there in time to help out, nor did it have the strength to.

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“Die.” Patriarch Clearwind’s eyes were ice cold, and all six slender swords in his hands simultaneously chopped out in a deceptively simple stance. Once this strike was unleashed, it seemed as though the world itself was falling apart.

The wind howled furiously as countless gales buffeted Ning, completely smashing through the lightning-water domain of sword-intent, which was incapable of stopping them in the slightest. The difference in power was glaring and overwhelming.

It was this killer technique which allowed Patriarch Clearwind to be famous throughout the Endless Territories. Without it, he was just a fairly

strong Daolord of the Fourth Step. With it, he was capable of threatening the lives of the vast majority of other Daolords of the Fourth Step! The reason why Daolord Battlemaster did not take part in this battle was precisely because he was worried about being killed by this attack.

Ning was entirely capable of retreating from it at high speeds! Battlemaster, however, didn't have Ning's speed.

This sort of killer technique was actually a type of forbidden art which used up an absolutely shocking amount of divine power.

"He isn't fleeing from it?" Patriarch Clearwind's eyes grew even colder.

Clang!

Ning valiantly struck out with all six swords in a defensive posture, using the mysteries of the Soleheart stance of his Omega Sword Dao to form a domain of absolute darkness around him.

BOOM!!!!

The terrifying winds blew through his defenses as though they were paper, destroying all in their path. They slammed straight into and through the dark domain around Ning, instantly shattering this abyssal domain apart and then smashing directly against the true body of Ning behind the domain.

"No!" Back in Vastheaven Palace, Su Youji revealed a look of panic in her eyes.

"What?! Why?!" Solesky couldn't believe it. He refused to believe that Ning would act in such a suicidal fashion. He knew how deadly this killer attack was. Why didn't he dodge it?

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Boom!!!

The terrifying blow landed directly against Ning, but the ancient cuirass of armor Ning was wearing was covered in many layers of countless divine runes. When the concussive power of the blow slammed into the armor, much of it was immediately absorbed and ablated, with some of the power

actually being transformed into energy that was then thrust back against the blow, weakening it even further. The actual process would be quite complicated to describe, but by the time the power of the blow made it through this suit of armor, it had less than one thousandth of its original power. That remaining amount of power was spread evenly throughout Ning's entire body, and it caused him a negligible amount of damage.

"This suit of Hegemon armor truly is extraordinary." Ning was filled with joy. The deceased Hegemon of the Dao of the Sword was naturally an expert in close combat. His most important treasure was naturally that dark blue greatsword, but his second most important treasure was that suit of armor.

The Paragon of Pills had poured all of her blood, sweat, and tears in crafting this suit of armor for the man she loved. It had no special properties at all. It must be understood that most powerful armors had various special properties, such as reflecting damage onto attackers or even containing powerful secret arts. The Hegemon's armor, however, was very simple. It had only one property – defense!

Virtually all attacks would be reduced to a thousandth of their original power. Perhaps a Hegemon's attack would do better, but even then it would only have a hundredth of its normal power.

Thanks to this suit of armor, the Sword Hegemon's body had been completely undamaged!

Ning had chosen to forcibly endure that killing blow precisely because he felt confident in the armor. But of course, even if he didn't have it he still wouldn't have been afraid, as he had already trained in the Hegemon's protective divine ability, the [Sword Dao Body], for over a thousand years. His body was already comparable to a low-grade Eternal weapon. If he wanted to keep training, he'd need to use certain treasures.

To go from being a top-grade Dao weapon to being a low-grade Eternal weapon seemed like a minor improvement, but there was a qualitative difference between Eternal weapons and Dao weapons. For example, Patriarch Clearwind was able to destroy top-grade Dao weapons, but he

wasn't able to cause any damage to low-grade Eternal weapons.

He had the Hegemon's armor protecting him on the outside, and a mighty protective divine ability on the inside! How could Patriarch Clearwind possibly injure him?

Boom! When the attack landed against him, he couldn't help but be knocked flying back. It was only thanks to the power of his lightning-water domain of sword-intent that he was able to stabilize himself and come to a halt.

"Pretty strong." Ning revealed a smile and a praising nod.

"Y-you..." Patriarch Clearwind's smirk suddenly froze as he stared at Ning in disbelief. "How are you..."

Even if Darknorth didn't die, he should've at least been heavily injured.

"Your killer technique's not strong enough. You don't have nearly the power you would need if you want to kill me." Ning shook his head. Even without the Hegemon's armor, his divine body's toughness vastly surpassed that of most Daolords of the Fourth Step. Ning had already paid a steep price to fully master the [Golden Idol] technique, making his body comparable to top-grade Dao weapons. To learn another divine ability that could further upgrade his body and make it comparable to an Eternal weapon, even a low-grade one, was quite difficult. The cost of such an ability would be staggeringly high, making it so that not even the vast majority of Daolords of the Fourth Step would be able to learn any such technique.

Upon mastering the [Sword Dao Body], your body would become comparable to a supreme Eternal weapon!

This was the Hegemon's own divine ability, after all. The only reason he had been so selfless as to give it to others was because he was dead! Someone still alive like Emperor Mirrorsnow or the almighty Brightshore Hegemon would always keep a few trump cards hidden for their own private usage when transmitting legacies to others.

"I-I... I'm impressed." Patriarch Clearwind suddenly waved his hand,

causing the distant shrine to suddenly fly towards him. He then flew straight into the shrine.

"Eh?" Ning was startled. The battle was over, just like that?

Still, there was nothing Ning could do. He could leave if he wanted, but since Patriarch Clearwind was actually stronger than him, Clearwind was similarly able to leave as he pleased.

"What, you are planning to leave?" The midair Ning asked.

"Not just yet. I think it's time for us to have a good chat," Patriarch Clearwind said from within his shrine. He had been thoroughly intimidated by Ning's absolutely overwhelming speed. If he stayed hidden with his shrine and relied on its formations, there would be nothing Ning could do to him.

"Solesky! Battlemaster!" Patriarch Clearwind called out loudly, his voice echoing within the skies. "We can have a chat now."

The furious gray storm had long ago vanished. Ning dispelled his lightning-water domain of sword-intent as well, and the skies became calm and sunny once more.

"Haha, you madman! So you are finally willing to talk?" Two streaks of light flew out from Vastheaven Palace. They were Daolord Solesky and Daolord Battlemaster. Daolord Solesky snickered, "Didn't you say you were going to besiege Vastheaven Palace for one or ten chaos cycles? Why do you want to talk now? What makes you think I want to talk to you? You really are overestimating your own importance."

"That was all my fault," Patriarch Clearwind said. "Solesky, my friend, please don't take offense."

Daolord Solesky's eyes bulged out, and Daolord Battlemaster was stunned as well. Even Ning was dazed.

The man was voluntarily admitting fault? He was even addressing Solesky as 'my friend'?

"Ahaha! It's rare for you to bow your head to anyone, you madman. But

the two of us have been tussling for so long... for you to suddenly address me as 'my friend' sends chills up my spine." Daolord Solesky glanced mockingly at Patriarch Clearwind. "You can't kill my brother Ji Ning, but he can't do anything to you either. Are you lowering your head in order to ransom back that Daolord of the Third Step of yours?"

"Ransoming him back is part of it," Patriarch Clearwind said from within his shrine. "More importantly, I wish for our two sides to reconcile. Let us wipe away all our old grievances with a single handshake and never be enemies again. If you wish to attach any conditions, my friend, you can just go ahead and name them."

Patriarch Clearwind knew exactly what he was doing.

He didn't fear Battlemaster. He didn't fear Solesky. He did, however, fear this Darknorth fellow! Darknorth was already incredibly powerful as a Daolord of the Second Step; there was nothing Clearwind could do to him. Once Darknorth reached the third step or the fourth step... given the feud between the two sides, that would probably be the day when Clearwind Temple would be wiped out. The best decision was for him to immediately resolve this feud, no matter what price had to be paid.

Chapter 21: Avatar

"Name any conditions we want?" Solesky and Battlemaster exchanged a glance, mirth in their eyes.

"The old madman's finally bowed his head. We've been fighting for tens of thousands of chaos cycles. Now, he's finally bowed his head." Solesky couldn't help but sigh. He had been tussling with Clearwind for many years now, and both were famous, respected figures who were unwilling to concede to the other. Since they were enemies, Vastheaven Palace and Clearwind Temple naturally became mortal enemies as well, and the struggle had gone on for tens of thousands of chaos cycles.

To bow the head represented the loss of face as well as the loss of many treasures.

"It is all because of Darknorth." Battlemaster glanced at the nearby Ji Ning.

"Solesky, my friend... to tell you the truth, do you think I would ever lower my head to you?" The distant Patriarch Clearwind, still within his shrine, shook his head. "Absolutely impossible. However, your Vastheaven Palace has gained yet another fine brother! Although I'm not worried about this Darknorth at present, he's still just a Daolord of the Second Step. Soon, he'll surpass me, and your Vastheaven Palace shall become famous throughout the Endless Territories alongside him."

Solesky and Battlemaster both laughed. In the future, Vastheaven Palace would be guarded by a truly unearthly Daolord, one who would most likely be able to kill even Eternal Emperors! It was obvious that Ning had that type of potential.

However... Clearwind, Solesky, and Battlemaster had no idea that Ning was actually even more terrifying than they thought him to be. In truth, Ning was nothing more than a Daolord of the First Step!

"You praise me too much," Ning said.

"Not at all. I'm just telling the truth," Patriarch Clearwind said, then

looked towards Solesky. “Go ahead, Solesky. Tell me what you want.”

“Clearwind, if you want to resolve the enmities between us, I don’t mind,” Solesky said. “But I do have three conditions.”

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The negotiations between Vastheaven Palace and Clearwind Temple went on for over half a day. Daolord Solesky’s initial requests had been truly excessive; even if Patriarch Clearwind had sold off all his possessions, it still wouldn’t be enough.

This was how haggling worked. One side asked for a sky-high price, the other side would counter with a dirt-low offer.

In the end, Patriarch Clearwind paid reparations of twenty million cubes worth of treasure. The feud between the two was thus brought to an end, and the Daolords of both sides swore lifeblood oaths not to cause trouble for each other again.

So long as the Daolords did not fight, the squabbles between their World-level cultivators, Elder Gods, and Ancestral Immortals were nothing more than minor matters.

But of course, Ning also squeezed all of Daolord Blesswind’s treasures out of him, extorting almost every last drop of chaos nectar from the man. In the end, the poor fellow had to swear a lifeblood oath swearing that he really had less than a cube of chaos nectar’s worth of treasure left! Only then did Ning allow Daolord Blesswind and the other captives to be sent back.

Within Vastheaven Palace. Ji Ning, Solesky, Battlemaster, and Brightfish had all gathered together. They were drinking Immortal wine and were chatting together.

“Hah! Just twenty million cubes.” Daolord Solesky shook his head. “I was planning to at least hit him for fifty million! I know he has an extremely valuable life-saving treasure; that treasure alone is worth fifty million. I blame Battlemaster! You kept on telling me to back off. Otherwise, there’s no way I would’ve let him off the hook that easily.”

"You were being too hard on him." Daolord Battlemaster sipped some wine from the cup in his hands. "He's just wary of Darknorth's future potential, but in truth there's nothing we can do to him right now. If you pushed him too far, he could just begin to evacuate Clearwind Temple and make it impossible for us to find him... and he might scheme in secret against us to take revenge. That would be nothing but trouble."

"To him, that life-saving treasure is more important than Clearwind Temple itself." Daolord Battlemaster sighed. "He only acquired it after experiencing countless dangers over the course of many years. You want him to hand it over? He'd rather you wipe out Clearwind Temple."

Solesky coughed a few times.

Powerful cultivators would usually expend their wealth on creating secret arts or powerful magic treasures. It was very rare for them to actually trade those things away to others! For example, the treasures which Daolord Solesky and Daolord Clearwind had, all combined, were definitely worth over a hundred million cubes each. The problem was that the actual amount of 'liquid' wealth they had was much less, as some of those treasures they needed for combat.

Ning's six lifeblood weapons, his Hegemon armor, and his Hegemon Dao-seals... they too would not be traded to others.

"It was all thanks to Ji Ning." Solesky looked at Ning. "Ji Ning, take the twenty million." As he spoke, he sent a storage treasure flying towards Ning.

"No way." Ning was badly shocked. How could he accept all this?

"You are just a Daolord of the Second Step. You'll need more treasures in the future. Just take it," Daolord Solesky urged, but Ning steadfastly refused.

The nearby Battlemaster said, "Brother Darknorth, you are a brand new Daolord. You'll need to spend money to create an avatar for yourself. A perfect avatar will cost roughly ten million cubes, all by itself. You'll need to spend money in other areas as well. Just take it."

Ning could tell that saying no was not an option. He said, “Then I’ll take half for now. If you keep pressing me, I won’t take anything.”

“Haha! Fine, fine, fine.” Solesky shook his head. “We won’t press you, alright? Brother Brightfish, you are also a Daolord of the Second Step. Take five million! Battlemaster, the rest is yours.”

“Big brother?” Battlemaster immediately protested.

“This isn’t necessary, big brother. You can’t do this,” Daolord Brightfish immediately said.

“My true body is in the Waveshift world. Once I gain what I need from it, I will immediately begin my Daomerge.” Daolord Solesky shook his head. “It doesn’t matter if I succeed or if I fail in my Daomerge; either way, more treasure will be useless to me.”

Ning, Battlemaster, and Brightfish all felt their hearts grow heavy.

Solesky had lived far longer than the rest of them. He was preparing for his Daomerge, and everyone knew that this virtually spelled a death sentence! Far, far too few were able to succeed in this process.

“Come, come! Have some more wine. Now that Vastheaven Palace has Darknorth as a member, I can face my Daomerge with much more confidence.” Daolord Solesky laughed loudly. “And today, my old enemy finally bowed his head before me. What an absolutely wonderful feeling! This feels better than gaining any amount of treasures.”

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For now, Ning elected to remain within his Darknorth Estate and quietly train inside it.

Ning had earned a total of thirteen million cubes worth of treasure from Patriarch Clearwind and Daolord Blesswind. Ten million would be used to purchase suitable materials for the creation of a perfect avatar for himself!

Within an estate-world.

Whooooooosh. This was a world of icy darkness, a world where a freezing wind howled through the skies. The icy wind filling the estate-

world came from a black cave, and deep within the cave there was an ice-locked figure. Next to that figure sat a white-robed youth in the lotus position. The white-robed figure's entire body was emanating an unearthly level of power that was being poured into the ice-locked figure.

Time slowly flowed on.

Crack! Crack! Crack! The layers of ice around the figure began to crack apart.

Boom! The ice shattered, allowing the formerly ice-bound figure to fly out. His body was completely nude, and he emanated an aura of endless ice and cold. His appearance was identical to Ji Ning's. Moments later, a layer of golden clothing appeared on his body.

The golden-robed Ning and the white-robed Ning glanced at each other.

"Mm. My avatar has finally taken form. It now has a tenth of my full power. The rest will be a matter of time." The white-robed Ning nodded slightly, then smiled. "Fellow Daoist Avatar, I'll have to trouble you to stay in Vastheaven Palace for now."

"I'll naturally follow your requests, true body." This was the golden-robed Ning's response.

In truth, the two shared the same memories and thoughts. This was nothing more than a bit of an amusing diversion for Ning.

His avatar contained the same Dao as he himself used. However... it didn't have the azureflower seal! Ning had tested out his avatar. It could use most divine abilities and secret arts, but it was unable to train in the Nine Chaos Seals no matter what!

"When my avatar uses the Hegemon's divine ability, it is capable of incredible power as well. The only problem is, it can't sustain it for too long." Ning shook his head. "Well, since my avatar has been formed, it is time for me to leave Vastheaven Palace."

.....

Ning went to meet with Daolord Solesky in private.

"Leaving Vastheaven Palace? When are you planning to go?" Daolord Solesky wasn't surprised.

"No point in wasting time. I'll leave tomorrow." Ning smiled.

Daolord Solesky nodded. "You are going to be going through a period of explosive growth. This is indeed the best time for you to go out adventuring! But when you are adventuring, you must be cautious, especially of Daolords of the Fourth Step. Don't underestimate any Daolord of the Fourth Step; one of them might have an ability or Dao that perfectly counters yours."

"Understood." Ning nodded. The only reason why he had gone out to fight Patriarch Clearwind was because he had a clear understanding of the man's powers. In the outside world, he would have to be far more cautious.

There were Daolords who could move even faster than ten times the speed of light, after all.

"Big brother, there is one thing I wish to trouble you about," Ning said.

"We're brothers. No need to stand on ceremony. Just tell me what you need," Daolord Solesky said.

"I wish to go to a Sacred City of the Dao Alliance," Ning said.

The Dao Alliance was the strongest of the six major powers in the Endless Territories. 99% of the territories were controlled by the Dao Alliance. Its only weakness was that it was not tightly governed and was a very loose organization, with many of the ancient, reclusive powers within it being figures with strange dispositions. If the Dao Alliance was truly unified and stood together, there was no way the other five organizations could possibly compete against it.

The Dao Alliance was absolutely unfathomable. Treasures, divine abilities, secret arts... the Dao Alliance was supreme in every area. Over the courses of countless years, many figures like Emperor Heartsword and Daolord Allgod had left behind their legacies to the Dao Alliance.

"Makes sense. We are Palace Lords of Vastheaven Palace, which means

we are members of the Dao Alliance.” Daolord Solesky nodded. “You really should go to the Dao Alliance to check things out.”

Chapter 22: Trailblazing

"The Dao Alliance covers too much territory. It has a total of eight Sacred Cities and is led by the Dao Alliance's Palace of Immortals," Daolord Solesky said. "Daolords normally head to the nearest Sacred City. This makes travel much simpler."

Ji Ning nodded. The distance between each of the cities was incredibly far, and the journey would be filled with many dangers. To physically travel all the way from one Sacred City to another one across so many territories was simply too taxing.

"The closest Sacred City to us... given that you fly a bit faster than me, you should be able to make it there in around a thousand years," Daolord Solesky said. "I've already reported the addition of a new Daolord within Vastheaven Palace to the Dao Alliance. Once you reach the Sacred City, first go and retrieve a Dao Alliance medallion. Otherwise, there will be many places within the Sacred City which you cannot enter."

"Understood." Ning nodded. The Dao Alliance did have enemies, such as the Dark Kingdom. There were many places within the Dao Alliance which outsiders simply were forbidden from entering!

"You can enter all eight of the Sacred Cities. The Dao Alliance's Palace of Immortals, however, is our true core. No one is permitted to enter unless they are invited by the palace itself. Only then can they enter," Daolord Solesky said. "Generally speaking, fairly powerful Daolords of the Fourth Step stand a good chance at receiving an invitation. Given how formidable you are, Ji Ning, you should be able to get an invitation in the future as well."

Ning nodded.

The headquarters of the six major forces were all mysterious, inscrutable places. The Palace of Immortals was the most mysterious and the most powerful of the six. Supposedly, it held the secrets behind the reason why the Dao Alliance had been able to maintain supremacy for so long without falling. However, very few knew the truth behind those secrets.

"There's one more thing I need to warn you about." Daolord Solesky suddenly seemed to remember something. He immediately warned solemnly, "The Dao Alliance is simply enormous, and so it is quite chaotic as well. It holds many different organizations within it, and the eight Sacred Cities are all led by different organizations. Every single Sacred City has certain ancient, powerful freaks ruling them from the shadows. No matter what, you must not let yourself get dragged into the internal battles of the Dao Alliance. My guess is, once your true power is revealed, they'll definitely try to recruit someone as talented as you into their fold."

"The eight Sacred Cities all belong to different organizations?" Ning was amazed. "So there are at least eight different competing 'branches'?"

"Nine main ones, actually. There are also many smaller organizations as well. To put it succinctly, the Dao Alliance is incredibly chaotic," Daolord Solesky said. "Supposedly, this involves some of the deepest secrets of the Palace of Immortals. Daolords of the Fourth Step like me and Battlemaster would never dare to get involved in these matters. Only those old freaks and some truly unearthly Daolords would dare to get involved. Even if you do wish to get involved, you should only do so after becoming a Daolord of the Fourth Step yourself. Otherwise, you'll end up dying without even realizing what is happening. The civil wars that erupt within the Dao Alliance are more vicious than anywhere else."

Ning was speechless.

The reason why the civil wars within the Dao Alliance were so frenzied was actually because the other five major forces in the Endless Territories were too weak; they might occasionally take a few provocative actions against the Dao Alliance, but they would never dare to launch any large-scale wars.

.....

Whoosh.

A vessel was soaring through the space of the primordial chaos. Atop the flying vessel were Su Youji, Daolord Pillsaint, and the white-robed Ji Ning.

They had already departed from Vastheaven Palace and had embarked upon an even greater journey.

"Master, this doesn't seem to be the way to the Sacred City, is it?"
Pillsaint was puzzled.

"We're going to take a detour first. We're going to my homeland first." Ning smiled. "It isn't too far away. We'll go to the Sacred City of the Dao Alliance after that."

"Your homeland?" Su Youji was curious. "Where is it?"

"You'll know when you get there." Ning chuckled. "However, you aren't allowed to tell others as to where my homeland is located."

"Understood," Su Youji and Pillsaint both said. Ning nodded.

It would take a thousand years to get to the nearest Sacred City. By comparison, heading back to the Three Realms, given his current speed, would only take a century!

"Master and Windfiend are planning to leave the Three Realms after making their breakthroughs. They wish to go explore the Endless Territories and gain a better understanding of the greater world outside." Ning frowned. "The spatial tunnel leading from the Badlands Territory to my homeland isn't very stable, and there are many dimensional tears within it. If they aren't lucky, they might end up being sucked into one of the tears and be teleported to who-knows-where."

"It has been so many years, but I've heard no news of Mother Nuwa at all. I'm afraid that she must have been trapped within one of those tears and was teleported away." This was Ning's hypothesis.

That unstable vortex passageway was extremely dangerous. Given Ning's level of power, he could use his sword-intent to suppress and stabilize the vortex, but how could Subhuti and the others possibly be strong enough to do the same?

"It seems I'll have to engage in a bit of trailblazing. I'll have to establish a safe and secure route from the Badlands Territory to the Three Realms," Ning mused.

The many ‘safe routes’ on the star maps of the Endless Territories had all been discovered by countless generations of exploring cultivators.

“My Primaltwin is in the Three Realms, while I am outside of it. I can sense its rough location,” Ning mused to himself. “If I continue to go forwards, I’ll reach it sooner or later, and the path I cleared would be safe for future travelers. Since I’m as strong as a Daolord of the Fourth Step and have the Hegemon’s armor on me, a bit of trailblazing shouldn’t be too difficult.”

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A hundred years later, they reached the borders of the Badlands Territory.

“Forward ho!” The flying vessel ventured deep into the unknown, unexplored parts of the endless primordial chaos.

Trailblazing was quite a dangerous decision, as you might encounter certain dangerous locations along the way. Ning only dared to do this because of how powerful he had become.

Ning sat there in the lotus position on the deck of his vessel. He could sense some of the dangers that were located within a certain distance from him. He was the master of the Omega Sword Dao, which was why he could in fact be titled as the ‘master of the Dao of the Sword’. The prime essence of the Dao of the Sword filled every inch of the universe, and it served as Ning’s ‘eyes’. The stronger Ning’s soul became and the higher level his insights into the Dao of the Sword reached, the greater distance he would be able to ‘see’ using the Dao of the Sword.

After much nurturing from the azureflower mist energy, Ning’s soul was now comparable to that of most Daolords of the Fourth Step.

Ning raised his head to stare off into the distance. “There is some danger roughly sixty trillion kilometers away from us. Most Daolords who enter that place will perish.”

A star map was located across Ning’s legs. Ning put down a marking on that star map.

He was marking down the various chaos stars and dangerous areas he encountered and saw on this journey. That way, those who used this map wouldn't worry about getting lost.

.....

To travel from the Badlands Territory to the Three Realms was quite a long journey. The trailblazing ended up taking more than three hundred years, but along the way Ning was able to sense only one place of incredible danger. The other areas, a bit of vigilance would suffice. But of course, that was only true for someone like Ning; for World-level cultivators, those places were all deathtraps!

"Haha, we're almost there. We are about to reach the Three Realms." Ning could sense that his Primaltwin was fairly close now, and he revealed a smile. "We should make it there in just a few more decades."

Establishing a safe passageway out would benefit the members of the Three Realms for countless years to come. So long as this passageway was kept secret, outsiders would have no idea how to enter and exit the Three Realms securely. Not even Daolords of the Fourth Step would have a way to locate the Three Realms with ease; Ning was only able to accomplish it thanks to his Primaltwin serving as a guidepost for him. He was able to sense where his Primaltwin was at all times, thus ensuring that he wouldn't get lost.

"Master, in the past three hundred years we've discovered quite a few dangerous areas." Su Youji couldn't help but raise this issue. "The area around your homeland is a bit too dangerous, isn't it?"

"It is rather dangerous, yes." Ning nodded. He too felt that the density of dangerous areas around the Three Realms was abnormally high.

"The universe is vast and mysterious. All things are possible." Ning smiled. Moments later, his face suddenly turned pale as a strange look appeared on his face.

"Eh?" Ning turned to stare in a certain direction.

"Master?" Su Youji and Pillsaint both noticed that something was off

with Ning.

Ning just stared intently off into the distance, and the outlines of the azureflower seal actually appeared on his forehead. The azureflower seal was currently resonating with a distant location. Even the azureflower region with his body was resonating!

“Something actually caused a resonance with the azureflower seal!” Ning was both shocked and nervous.

He had encountered quite a few fortuitous benefactors, such as the Paragon of Pills and the almighty Brightshore Hegemon. Both of them were Hegemon-level figures! He had also received the legacy of the deceased Hegemon of the Dao of the Sword. By now, Ning was a very experienced man... but the [Nine Chaos Seals], its azureflower region, and the azureflower mist energy it generated all remained completely outside of Ning’s level of understanding.

In addition, it had been Daoist Three Purities who discovered the Nine Chaos Seals floating outside the Three Realms. This entire time, Ning had felt certain that the primordial chaos around the Three Realms had to contain many secrets within them. And yet, all these years he had never been able to discover them.

But now... while he was trailblazing a path to the Three Realms, he had encountered something which resonated with his azureflower seal.

“Let’s head over there and take a look,” Ning said. Swoosh! The flying vessel began to fly towards the direction where the resonance was coming from.

“What is it, Master?” Su Youji couldn’t help but ask.

“From this moment forwards, the two of you need to obey every single word that I say.” Ning had a solemn look on his face. The closer they moved towards that location, the stronger the resonance with his azureflower seal became.

After flying for a few dozen days, the primordial chaos in the surrounding area completely vanished, revealing a patch of pure, pristine

space. There was no energy at all in this region of space; in fact, even the power of the universal prime essence of the Dao of the Sword had been suppressed and rendered unable to enter this region. And it wasn't just the Dao of the Sword; none of the other universal prime essences were able to enter this place at all.

"Is that..." Ning stared at the vast patch of empty space before him. It was completely pure and pristine, and at its very end he was able to see some golden mist. Upon seeing that golden mist, Ning had a sudden feeling of incredible danger.

"Youji, Pillsaint, the two of you must wait here. Do not move any closer," Ning barked.

Chapter 23: Deluxe Hellgold

“Master.” Pillsaint and Su Youji both started to grow nervous. The area up ahead contained a region of pure space, with nothing within it whatsoever; not even the prime essences of the universe held sway there. And yet, when they stared at that region of pure space the two of them felt their very souls shiver in fear. They had the feeling that if they barged into that place, it was virtually guaranteed that they would die.

“Master, I can sense that this is no ordinary place. Don’t enter rashly,” Su Youji said immediately.

“Master, you should first come up with a method to test it out. Only then should you enter it,” Pillsaint agreed.

Ji Ning stared towards the front, a solemn look on his face. He was supremely confident in his abilities to handle even the likes of Patriarch Clearwind. Although the empty field of pure space in front of him seemed rather special, he was certain it posed negligible danger to him. But that region of golden mist... his subconscious was screaming of danger. Ning knew that the depths of the golden mist had to hold something that was terrifyingly dangerous.

“This region of space is quite extraordinary. All techniques and spells have been kept at bay by it! Even the prime essences of the universe avoid this place,” Ning said. “I can’t scan it with my godsense either, nor can I scan it with my Dao of the Sword at all. There are no other options.”

“Then don’t go in!” Su Youji argued.

“Right, Master! Forget it. Don’t go in.” Pillsaint said the same thing. The endless primordial chaos was filled with dangerous places. If you knew it was dangerous, why did you have to go inside? But Ning only shook his head.

The Nine Chaos Seals remained the most inconceivably powerful technique he had ever encountered. Now that his azureflower seal was resonating so strongly with this location, it was obvious that there was something calling to him from the depths of the golden mist. Ning had

already placed his Lifeblood Dao-seal by the side of his avatar in Vastheaven Palace. Even if he died, he would be able to use that Dao-seal to come back to life.

Taking on a bit of risk for the chance to learn some of the secrets of the azureflower seal was worth it. "Just wait for me here," Ning barked.

"Acknowledged." Pillsaint and Su Youji had no choice but to accept his order. "But be careful!" Su Youji added.

Ning nodded gently. Moments later, a vortex-world formed by dark-gold lightning and icy-white water appeared around in the area around him. Swoosh! Ning stepped into the region of pure space, and everything around him for ten thousand kilometers became drawn into that lightning-snow vortex.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoooosh. As soon as he entered that region, a stream of invisible energy instantly swept towards Ning. This surge of invisible energy was flowing through the empty region at all times. It seemed almost ephemeral as it passed straight through the lightning-water vortex-world, then brushed against Ning's body. It was able to just barely make it through Ning's Hegemon armor, but it was dramatically weakened in the process. It then brushed against Ning's soul itself, but Ning's soul remained very stable; it was as though a gentle breeze had blown across it.

"A direct soul attack?" Ning was quite wary of this. He immediately turned his head to look backwards, willing his lightning-water vortex-world to stretch out and encompass Su Youji and Pillsaint within it. "No matter what, do not enter this region of empty space. It contains a pervasive force that will directly assault your soul. Ordinary Daolords of the First Step would not be able to endure this type of assault." Ning's voice echoed in the area around Su Youji and Pillsaint.

After issuing the warning, Ning continued to fly through the region of empty space, moving at just two times the speed of light. For him, this was fairly slow. As for Pillsaint and Su Youji, they watched Ning leave with worried gazes as Ning moved towards that region of golden mist.

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A short while later, Ning reached the region of golden mist. This mist completely covered this side of the empty region, and Ning could sense that the thing which was resonating with his azureflower seal was on the other side of the mist.

“What is this mist?” Ning reached out with his hand and formed a stream of sword-light. The stream of sword-light stretched out to become thirty thousand meters long. It delved straight into the golden mist in front of Ning, slicing through it without encountering any impediments at all.

“The mist doesn’t seem to be dangerous or offensive, in and of itself,” Ning mused. “The sense of danger should be emanating from deeper within the golden mist.” Ning then reached out with his right hand, making it expand to become more than thirty meters long before plunging it into the golden mist.

Ning was right to be so cautious. The strong sense of danger coming from his subconscious as well as the marvelous properties of the Nine Chaos Seals ensured that Ning would not dare to be negligent in dealing with this matter. As Ning saw it, anyone capable of creating the Nine Chaos Seals had to be at least as strong as the likes of the almighty Brightshore Hegemon or the Paragon of Pills.

“There really does seem to be no danger here. This is nothing more than a metallic form of energy.” Ning was unable to use his godsense to scan the place; his only option was to use these fairly crude ways to test everything out. Whoosh! Ning flew into the golden mist.

With the golden mist completely surrounding him, even Ning was only able to see out to a distance of roughly ten million kilometers. He carefully advanced at the speed of light; ten million kilometers might seem like a long distance, but if Ning moved at his full speed of ten tiems the speed of light, he’d pass that distance in the blink of an eye. It’d be too risky.

“Eh?” Ning swept the region before him with his gaze. Within this region of ten million kilometers, he saw a strange beast that looked like a

giant golden pangolin. Its entire body was covered in armor plates, and it was gracefully flying through the air. Each time it glided through the air, it moved at three times the speed of light.

Ning couldn't sense this creature posing much of a threat to him. "Still, best to avoid it. No reason to cause any unnecessary trouble at a time like this." With but a thought, Ning suddenly vanished entirely.

Ning had just used the Shadowless evasion skill, becoming one with the golden mist and completely invisible to the naked eye. Given how distant that carapaced creature was, it naturally wouldn't be able to discover Ning.

Ning spent sixteen full hours flying through the golden mist, and the resonance with his azureflower seal only grew stronger. However, he remained within the golden mist region.

"Eh? What's with all the beasts?" Ning swept the area before him with his gaze, only to discover twenty-three golden beasts congregating together roughly ten million kilometers away from him. Some were large, some were small, but all of them caused Ning to feel a hint of danger. "The sense of danger isn't that strong. I should probably be able to deal with them, but... the ones I encountered earlier were all by themselves. Why are twenty-three of them here?"

The strangest environments always gave birth to the strangest and most unique lifeforms or animals. Waterwalker, Bertulu, and others like them who were born with sufficient amounts of intelligence could train in the Dao like any cultivator. These beasts before Ning, however, were fairly dumb and more like bugbeasts; there was no way for them to cultivate at all. Still, the universe had given them their own path to growth and evolution. Although it was guaranteed that there was no way this path could let them gain eternity, it still provided them with tremendous combat power.

"Why are they all gathered here? Is this their home?" Ning felt quite curious, and so he used his Shadowless evasion skill to move closer to them. When he reached a distance of two million kilometers, he was able to see them quite clearly.

The beasts were all scattered in a circular fashion around a golden pearl that was slowly spinning in place. The twenty-three carapace beasts were all swallowing in the energy being emanated by that golden pearl. The beasts were dumb, but they knew that absorbing the energy being given off by this pearl would help them grow stronger.

"Is that..." Ning frowned, then stared in astonishment. "Deluxe hellgold? That's deluxe hellgold! Supposedly, it can be used to serve as the energy core for a golem of the fourth step. D-Damn my luck is good. I actually ran into a pearl of deluxe hellgold!"

Golems with the power of Daolords of the Fourth step were incredibly few in number, primarily because the materials needed to build cores for them were difficult to forge, with all the materials being incredibly rare. Deluxe hellgold was one of the things that could be used to forge such a core. In other words... if you had a pearl of deluxe hellgold, you would have the majority of the ingredients needed to construct a golem-Daolord of the Fourth Step!

There were also a number of other materials that could be used to build an energy core, but all of them were just as incredibly rare.

When deluxe hellgold was used to forge magic treasures, the magic treasure in question could change freely. It could even switch from being a suit of armor to a sharp sword, and it would have the power of a top-grade Eternal treasure in any form. But of course, using such a precious material to forge a magic treasure was a very wasteful act. Generally speaking, people would save it for creating golems! The golem itself would be as tough as a top-grade Eternal treasure, one which could change and transform at will. It would be the perfect meat shield, and Eternal Emperors would use them to keep themselves alive.

"Once I get enough materials, I'll invite a true grandmaster artificer to work on one for me," Ning mused. "Many organizations have permanent 'buy orders' for deluxe hellgold, with the price set at thirty to forty million cubes of chaos nectar." There were many major powers who would go out of their way to buy this material, but...

Well. The sellers weren't fools either. Everyone knew how rare this material was. Generally speaking, sellers would only be willing to trade it for similarly rare treasures. Everyone had chaos nectar; who cared about that? Not everyone, however, would necessarily have high-quality treasures. Some unique ones simply couldn't be found anywhere else.

If Ning was to acquire this deluxe hellgold, he'd be able to trade it for some treasures which were truly useful towards him. These were treasures that people generally wouldn't be willing to exchange for chaos nectar, not unless Ning was willing to pay two or three times more than the market price.

"I still haven't discovered the source of the resonance with my azureflower seal, but I found a pearl of deluxe hellgold." Ning was rather excited. "The only problem is that it is surrounded by those twenty-three beasts."

Chapter 24: Rooted Down

Ji Ning stared at the twenty-three beasts off in the distance, his eyes narrowing slightly.

“Kill!” Ning didn’t hesitate at all. He immediately began to quietly approach those beasts. Any major power would’ve made the same decision as he was right now, because only a fool would give up the chance to acquire a treasure like deluxe hellgold without even giving it a shot! It must be understood that even the deceased Sword Hegemon had only left Ning with fifty million cubes of chaos nectar, which wasn’t that much more than the deluxe hellgold was worth!

This pearl of deluxe hellgold was far more valuable than even the Eternal blood had been!

Whoosh. Ning used the Shadowless evasion skill as he continued to stealthily advance. One million kilometers. Five hundred thousand kilometers. Three hundred thousand kilometers...

The physically largest member of the carapace beasts that were absorbing energy from the hellgold suddenly turned its head to stare in Ning’s direction, a look of rage appearing within its deep eyes. Moments later, it let out a furious roar. “RAAAAWR!” Its roar was ear-piercing and rent the skies, causing countless streaks of heaven-destroying energy to sweep straight towards Ning.

“Looks like I’ve been discovered. Attack!” Ning’s speed increased dramatically as he sped up to move at ten times the speed of light, and streaks of dark-gold lightning and icy-white water erupted from his body. An awesome vortex-world of water and lightning instantly appeared in front of him, encompassing all of the strange beasts within it.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

It sounded like stones cracking apart. Explosions appeared on the bodies of eleven of the smaller beasts as the carapace-like bodies burst open. Moments later, they disappeared as their bodies were transformed into dust. Nearly half of the twenty-three beasts had died from Ning’s first

strike.

"Kill the invader!" The largest beast let out a frenzied howl as the other carapace beasts all charged furiously towards Ning as well.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Ning immediately activated [Three Heads, Six Arms]. He wielded his six Northbow swords in his hands as he blocked multiple strikes from the swarming beasts.

While blocking their attacks, Ning was able to sense several streams of strange, penetrating power be transmitted into his body. The power dug through the Hegemon armor and invaded deeper into his body, making him feel rather numb.

"What a strange attack. Even with the Hegemon armor protecting me, I still feel a bit numb. If I was an ordinary Daolord of the Fourth Step, I probably would actually end up dying here." Ning relaxed slightly. Different beasts which lived in different environments would have different attacks. Some were born with terrifying illusory powers, while others were born with tremendous skill in formations. Still others were able to move so fast, they could attack at the speed of a hundred times the speed of light.

If Ning encountered a beast whose powers perfectly countered his, he would be in serious trouble. However, although the carapace beasts before him had very strange attacks, Ning feared creatures like them the least. He had a suit of Hegemon armor and a body equivalent to a low-grade Eternal weapon; to harm him through direct attacks was incredibly difficult.

"Kill!" Ning's sword-arts were arcane and profound, far above the level of these carapace beasts.

Slash! Sword-light flashed, piercing through the head of one of the carapace beasts. Moments later, its head exploded as the internal organs inside of it were reduced to dust.

Slash! Slash! Ning's sword was incredibly sharp, and the Blood Drop stance of his Omega Sword Dao contained tremendous penetrative power. The carapace beasts were able to endure Ning's lightning-water vortex-world, but they weren't able to withstand Ning's sword! Soon, just

three of the beasts were left in the air. These were the three largest beasts, and they had the toughest carapaces as well, so tough that not even Ning's sword was able to pierce through them.

"Grrrr."

"Invader."

"Detestable invader." The three strongest carapace beasts were completely enraged by the deaths of their fellows. They attacked even more ferociously than before, and each time Ning clashed against them he could sense that penetrative power seep into his body.

Ning suddenly put away five of his swords, leaving just one behind. His six hands all gripped that single sword as he raised it high into the air, then delivered a ferocious chop with it. The speed of this blow seemed both as slow as a falling leaf and as fast as a flash of lightning. An endless amount of power quickly became to accumulate, making it seem like a volcano that was about to explode.

BOOM! Ning's sword seemed to strike out in a head-on blow, but it actually fluttered out in an unpredictable arc that skirted past the claws of the carapace beasts, then smashed one of them on its head.

Ning was taking advantage of the fact hat these beasts had low levels of comprehension and technique. If he was fighting against Daolords of the Fourth Step like Patriarch Clearwind, the latter would be able to block even a maximum-speed attack from Ning.

A low, rumbling explosion rang out and the carapace beast's body trembled. Although its internal organs were very tough, in the end they couldn't compare to those of a cultivator who had trained in a protective divine ability. For cultivators, the strength and endurance of every part of their body was identical. As for these carapace beasts, they had incredibly tough shells but somewhat more fragile internal organs.

Under Ning's most powerful sword-strike, the creature's organs were reduced to smithereens, and it died on the spot. Its body turned soft as it fell backwards, then simply hovered there in the air, its body twitching every so often as blood flowed out of its nostrils.

“Next.” It was as though Ning was riding on a sharp sword. With a swoosh, he moved at ten times the speed of light and appeared next to another one of the carapace beasts, and the beast bellowed in rage and fear as he approached.

BOOM! Yet another explosion rang out. The beast had tried to fight back, but so what? It was still struck on the head, and it too fell backwards as all signs of life disappeared from its corpse.

“And that leaves you.” Ning turned his gaze towards the largest carapace beast, the one who had been the first to discover Ning.

“Invader, you shall die for invading our racial lands.” The carapace beast let out a low growl. Its armored carapace was clearly thicker than those of the others, and it was noticeably stronger as well.

BOOM! Ning struck out with a furious chop, his six arms clenched around that single sword as he once more delivered a hammering blow to the skull of the beast. An explosion rang out, and even the space around them began to splinter. The carapace beast was knocked backwards by the force of the stunning blow, but it then raised its head calmly to give Ning a murderous glare.

“What?!” Ning’s face tightened. For it to possess unearthly defenses was one thing, but how was it that even a head-on kinetic strike was unable to kill it?!

Whoosh. The carapace beast once more charged forwards, its tail sweeping straight towards Ning. As for Ning, he once more wielded all six Northbow swords as he moved at his absolute maximum speed while using his lightning-water vortex-world to constrain his foe.

Slash! Clang! Boom!

Ear-piercing screeches, low growls, light pants. All sorts of sounds erupted as the space around them was repeatedly torn apart and regenerated as Ning engaged the largest carapace beast in a furious battle.

Whoosh! Two streaks of sword-light shot out almost like a pair of flexible ropes, quickly wrapping themselves around that carapace beast

with multiple layers of ‘shackles’.

“No! NO!” The carapace beast had been completely bound. It immediately struggled to break free, only to no avail.

“Even I would laugh at myself if you were able to break free from this.” Ning revealed a smile. “It seems using ‘softer’ methods is more appropriate for dealing with crazed beasts like this.” Ning had indeed used a pair of Northbow swords to tie up this beast.

The Northbow swords had been forged for Ning by Emperor Gonflame himself, and they were lifeblood weapons that were well-suited towards all aspects of the Dao of the Sword. They could be ferocious, could be insidious, could be unpredictable... and they could be both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ in their fighting styles. They could be ‘hard’ in striking like a heavy sword, or they could be ‘soft’ in striking like a whip. This was the nature of the Northbow swords.

“Get in here.” Ning produced a gourd, then unplugged the stopper. Whoosh! Instantly, the roaring and struggling carapace beast was drawn flying into the gourd. Moments later, two steraks of sword-light flew out from the gourd and into the scabbard on Ning’s back. Ning then waved his hand again as he collected the corpses of the other carapace beasts as well. Clearly, their shells could be used as manufacturing components.

“That’s finally done.” Ning let out a sigh of relief. It might’ve looked like a quick victory, but Ning had already used all the tools he had available to win this fight. “The deluxe hellgold.” Ning turned his gaze towards that pearl of deluxe hellgold. This was what he really wanted.

Ning stepped forward, reaching out with his right hand and clasping that pearl, then gave it a tug.

Clack clack clack! Countless strands of golden energy in the area around it began to tremble. It was as though invisible ropes were connected to the deluxe hellgold, preventing its removal.

“What’s going on?” Ning stared, then gave it another tug. Once again, the deluxe hellgold seemed to be rooted down and immovable. The golden mist for ten million kilometers around him once more began to shudder.

Only when Ning stopped tugging did the golden mist go back to normal.

"It seems the golden mist is connected to the deluxe hellgold." Now that Ning understood the connection, he tugged at it one final time with all his force.

BOOM! A massive explosion could be heard as the pearl of deluxe hellgold was torn away and entered Ning's grasp. Ning immediately stored it away into his estate-world.

Rumble...

The endless amounts of golden mist instantly began to roil about as they furiously flooded towards a certain direction, becoming sparser and sparser until it completely disappeared. Soon, the area around Ning became completely pristine, with not a hint of golden mist remaining.

Ning stared at his surroundings in amazement. The golden mist had vanished up to a distance of ten billion kilometers around him. Only outside the ten billion kilometer range could more of the golden mist be seen.

Ning immediately turned to look towards the direction of the resonance with the azureflower seal. Tens of billions of kilometers away, within that golden mist, Ning was able to vaguely make out an enormous silhouette of something that looked like an estate.

"An estate?" Ning's eyes lit up.

The surrounding area for ten billion kilometers was now completely clear of golden mist. Quite a few carapaced creatures stared at their surroundings in astonishment. Just a few seconds ago, they had been surrounded by golden mist. Why had it all completely vanished? Soon, their gazes turned towards the distant white-robed youth.

"GRWAAAR!"

"An invader!"

"Kill!"

There were thousands of those carapace beasts within this region of ten

billion kilometers, and they all glared at Ning as they let out furious roars and charged straight towards him.

Chapter 25: Azureflower Estate

Ji Ning was badly shocked. There were actually thousands of carapace beasts within ten billion kilometers of him? And several dozen were comparable in size to the leader he had fought a short while ago.

“KILL!” One particular carapace beast whose entire body was enormous and pitch-black let out a furious roar, its head upraised and its glaring eyes filled with murder.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The roars generated shockwaves that were visible to the naked eye that smashed through everything before them, reducing everything a hundred million meters ahead of the creature to be reduced into dust.

When Ning looked at the pitch-black carapace beast, a sense of tremendous danger arose within his heart. The sense of danger was far stronger than the feeling Patriarch Clearwind had given him a short while ago. He realized that if he actually engaged this creature in combat, he would probably lose his life here.

“Time to leave right away.” Ning immediately used the Shadowless evasion skill and disappeared without a trace.

The thousands of carapace beasts were all stunned. Due to the strange force permeating this area, even the prime essences of the universe were held at bay here, and Ning was unable to use his godsense to scan the place at all. This meant that the carapace beasts were similarly unable to scan Ning. Even the beast closest to Ning’s location was tens of millions of kilometers away from him; there was simply no way to lock onto Ning’s precise location from such a great distance.

Swoosh! Ning continued to stealthily flee at ten times the speed of light using the Shadowless evasion skill. He secretly celebrated, “Thank goodness there’s no way to scan this empty area. Otherwise, there’s no way I would’ve been able to escape.”

“GWRAAAAR!” After being unable to locate Ning, the pitch-black carapace beast lifted its head and let out a furious howl that completely

shattered space in the area around it. Even carapace beasts which were located close to it all retreated from it in fear.

.....

Ning began to use his evasion skill to flee towards the direction where the azureflower resonance was emanating from. Whoosh! He once more flew into a region of golden mist. Through it, he could vaguely make out the silhouette of that towering estate up ahead.

"Is that an estate?" Ning continued to fly forwards.

Sometimes, things look deceptively close. He was clearly able to make out that estate from far away, but he spent ten hours flying towards it. During that period of time, he encountered two more pearls of deluxe hellgold. Alas, each of those two pearls had over ten thousand carapace beasts surrounding it, as well as a pitch-black carapace beast.

Just staring at the thousands of carapace beasts surrounding the pearl of deluxe hellgold, Ning felt a sense of tremendous danger. He could sense that as soon as he attacked, he would be almost instantly swarmed and killed by the carapace beasts!

The ten thousand-plus carapace beasts had divine runes glowing above their shells. The runes were humming in unison, and the power emanating them caused even Ning's heart to quail. Clearly, these beast had a way to join together into a formation. A joint attack from more than ten thousand carapace beasts would probably surpass even one of the most powerful of Daolords!

Previously, Ning had been able to slay those twenty-three carapace beasts because there simply weren't enough of them around; they weren't able to join together into a formation that would threaten him.

"It seems that my decision to take away one of those pearls of deluxe hellgold has put the other carapace beasts on high alert," Ning mused. "Still... to be able to acquire one pearl is already quite lucky."

Ning became more cautious as well. "What in the world is this place? Even the energy of the prime essences of the universe is forced to avoid

this empty region, and the golden mist region holds treasures like deluxe hellgold within it. I've found three pearls, but there has to be far more than that."

"And those carapace beasts! The strongest ones are definitely on par with Daolords of the Fourth Step. As for the ones with the pitch-black shells, they can crush the vast majority of Daolords. If all of them gather together, I suspect that even Eternal Emperors would find it hard to gain victory against them." Ning was feeling rather nervous. He hadn't even entered the estate yet, but the outside perimeter was already filled with terrors. What, then, would the estate itself hold?

Whoosh!

Roughly ten hours after acquiring the deluxe hellgold, Ning finally reached the towering estate. The estate itself was emanating an endless aura of golden mist.

"What's this?" Ning stared at the utterly enormous estate in front of him, and its walls were like mountain ranges. The powerful ripples emanating from the walls ensured that Ning didn't even think about trying to scale over them.

"The main gates are over there." Ning immediately flew towards the gates of the estate.

A short while later, Ning reached the main gates. Directly above the main gates there was an image of an azure flower that was slowly swiveling in midair. It radiated a sacred, natural aura which seemed to whisper that even if the universe itself changed or if time itself ended, this flower would remain here forever.

"What in the..." Ning raised his head to stare at the image of an azure flower. He trembled, a look of shock in his eyes. That azure flower? Only after he had managed to combine all of the Nine Chaos Seals had he been able to manifest the azureflower seal, then gain an azureflower region in his body. The azureflower seal looked absolutely identical to the azure flower image hovering above the gates to his estate.

"It seems as though there has to be some sort of connection between my

Nine Chaos Seals and this estate,” Ning mused to himself. “I wonder how Daoist Three Purities ran into those seals in the past. Given the level of power he was at, there’s no way he could’ve travelled from the Three Realms to this place.”

This place was quite a distance away from the Three Realms, and back then Ning obviously hadn’t blazed a trail out from the Three Realms. In addition, even weaker Daolords would perish within the empty region and within the golden mist.

“The gates...?” Ning turned his gaze from the azure flower to the estate gates. The towering estate gates were covered with carvings that looked like tree roots. The carvings looked chaotic and complicated, but when Ning’s gaze towards them he could sense an invisible power surge out from the diagrams and sweep around Ning’s heart.

Whoosh.

Ning continued to stand in front of the estate gates, but he closed his eyes. The deepest pains within his heart were once more dragged out from where he had hidden them.

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“I wouldn’t dare beg that you send my senior apprentice-sister back to my side, Godking; all I hope is that she can live a simple, peaceful life. If you can do this, I will be endlessly grateful.” Ning fell to his knees before the Godking.

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“You are the one who personally consigned her to endless torment within the Infinity Hells! It was you! You personally!!!” The Godking’s furious roars reverberated with Ning’s mind.

.....

“Didn’t you say...that she’s already dead, and that you killed her? Haha... then, let me let her truly die.”

.....

“Ahahaha...” The towering figure of the Rahu-Ning raised its head towards the heaven, his wild laughter echoing through the Three Realms’ battlefield.

.....

“It was my fault. I was the one who consigned you to the Infinity Hells. I was the one who caused your soul to be destroyed.”

.....

The most agonizing, wrenching memories in his heart were all pulled out and magnified, and the sense of self-recrimination which Ning felt was amplified ten thousand times over. Ning was completely absorbed in his pain and self-blame. He stood there in front of the estate, his entire body trembling. In this moment, his Hegemon armor, his lifeblood weapons, and his protective Dao-seals weren’t able to help him out at all.

Both his soul and his truesoul were trembling. The same wasn’t true for just him; even the black-robed Primaltwin Ning was shaking back in the Three Realms. As for his avatar in Vastheaven Palace, it was also in the same dazed state. It was as though they had fallen into an endless abyss and were sinking deeper and deeper into it.

“Go ahead and die. Once you die, you’ll be together with her once more.” This was what that invisible surge of energy was whispering to him.

Ning’s soul and truesoul were shaking so hard, they were about to splinter apart. If they really did shatter, his true body, his Primaltwin, and his avatar would all fall simultaneously. Not even his Lifeblood Dao-seal would be able to save him. This was a technique available to the truly major powers who stood at the apex of all life.

“I’ve already made my choice. Even if I had to choose again, I would choose the same thing. That was a war! A war which would determine the destiny of all the living creatures of the Three Realms!

“The war has concluded. Both my father and my mother have returned. I, Ji Ning, shall use all the years of my life and all the power that is available to me to find my wife and bring her back. For her sake, I would

willingly sacrifice all that I have.

“Nothing and no one will bar my path!”

Still standing in front of the gates, Ning opened his eyes. His eyes shone with a terrifyingly sharp light that reflected the innermost depths of his heart. Nothing and no one would ever be able to stop him on his path, and he would continue on it until death itself came for him!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Ning’s heartforce was surging and growing increasingly powerful as it intersected more and more with his sea of consciousness. Once he experienced a few more things within this universe and accumulated a bit more power, he would be able to break through to the sixth stage of heartforce.

“Thank you, mighty creator of the Azureflower Estate.” The white-robed Ning stared at the gates in front of him. “Thank you for helping me to once more reaffirm my own Dao-heart.”

“This is my Dao, and this is my heart. I will continue on this path until the day I die.” Ning walked forwards.

Boom!

The strange tree-root carvings atop the gates seemed to be able to sense Ning’s terrifyingly strong Dao-heart, a Dao-heart which no one could alter or shake. Only someone with a heart like this would have a chance of truly reaching the apex, would have a chance of standing above all other living beings. The most terrifying of major powers would also need terrifyingly strong Dao-hearts.

The gates to the estate automatically swung open with a rumbling sound. The Azureflower Estate, which had lain silent for countless years, had been opened once more.

Chapter 26: Emperors?

The gates swung open. Ji Ning stood outside the gates, staring inwards. He was able to see that the insides of the towering estate stretched out at least ten billion kilometers, and an awesome, terrifying aura instantly swept out towards him from inside. The aura of power circulated in accordance with a formation and gathered at three particular spots, where three trees were located.

"Is this...?" Ning's face turned pale when he looked at them.

Three trees. The first tree was in a corner, and its trunk was twisted like a coiling dragon. The entire tree, including its leaves, glowed with a faint blue light. It had three fruits hanging off its branches, and the fruits were snow-white in color and fist-sized. The fruits were surrounded by surges of flowing blue energy.

The second tree was the largest tree and had the most foliage. It was like an enormous canopy of flowers that covered an area of tens of millions of kilometers, and as soon as Ning saw it Ning realized that this tree only had two fruits on it. Both fruits were completely blood-red, and they looked as though blood would flow out of them if anyone touched them.

The third tree was the smallest one, so small it could simply be described as a sapling. It was roughly just three meters tall, and it looked semi-translucent and as cold as ice. Every single leaf was like a work of art, while the sparse branches held nine fruit that glowed with light. Each fruit was like a miniature sun that glowed dazzlingly.

"Is that one of the eight sacred bloodfruits, the 'skyjewel bloodfruit'?" When Ning's gaze fell upon the two blood-red fruits located on the second (and largest) tree, he couldn't help but feel stunned. This was insane. Insane!

The eight sacred bloodfruits... most likely, people like Daolord Solesky had never even heard of them. Ning only knew of them because of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters]. The [Seven Leafpill Chapters] had contained a great deal of information regarding rare ingredients, including the eight

sacred bloodfruits. Every single one of the eight was incomparably rare, and a single sacred bloodfruit tree would drive Eternal Emperors wild with lust and could incite warfare amongst Hegemons.

"Skyjewel bloodfruit... that means this is a sacred bloodfruit tree?" Ning stared at the awesomely large tree before him, then turned to look at the other two. The first tree was the one with a twisted trunk that looked like a coiling dragon, while the other tree was the sapling. However, Ning had the feeling that the aura of power emanating from these two trees was every bit the equal of the central sacred bloodfruit tree.

"I only recognize the skyjewel bloodfruit." Ning shook his head. "I don't recognize the other two at all." The only reason he even recognized the former was because of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters]. Otherwise, he wouldn't recognize any of them at all.

"I wonder... can I take them away?" Ning could feel his heartrate speed up. "Won't know until I find out." Ning walked over, quickly arriving at the large tree at the very center. Ning reached out with his right hand, which expanded to become so large that it blotted out the skies itself. His hand was now a million kilometers in size, and it reached out and grabbed the tree by the main trunk, seeking to uproot it! Ning's movements were very slow; if any danger appeared, he would have ample time to react.

BOOM! Suddenly, a surge of power emanated from the surface of that tree, knocking Ning's hand aside.

"Seems I can't take it with me after all." Ning actually laughed. This was as he had predicted; these three trees had clearly been planted here by the major power who had set up the Azureflower Estate, after all. How could that major power have allowed others to so easily rob him of his trees?

"I wonder if I can harvest the fruit or not." Ning then reached out to one of the fruits. He was able to easily harvest a completely blood-red fruit. Pop! The fruit fell into his hands.

"So one sacred bloodfruit has fallen into my grasp, just like that?" Ning was rather amazed. He had just wanted to give it a try; he hadn't expected to actually succeed. "What about another one?" Ning reached out to try

and harvest the other bloodfruit, but this time a wave of power swept out from the sacred bloodfruit tree's trunk, preventing Ning from succeeding. "So stingy! Still, one is enough. Thank you, senior."

The sacred bloodfruit tree was currently sending surges of power to the location where the first bloodfruit had been harvested, and the power was slowly taking the form of a bloody ball of mist. Clearly, the tree was beginning to give birth to a new fruit.

A single sacred bloodfruit tree could at most give birth to two fruits at once. Now that Ning had harvested one, it could give birth to a second one, but of course that would take quite some time.

The value of a single fruit was naturally much lower than that of the actual tree, which would be capable of giving birth to sacred bloodfruit over and over. Despite that, it was still a rare reassurance worth over twenty million cubes of chaos nectar. Treasure like this could be pined for but never planned on!

"What about the other two trees?" Ning headed over to try his luck with harvesting once again.

.....

Uprooting the trees? Impossible. He couldn't break as much as a single twig on the trees. These three ancient, mysterious trees seemed to possess sentience; they would only permit Ning to harvest a single fruit each! After that, they wouldn't even let Ning draw near them.

"These three fruits...?" Ning waved his hand, causing three fruits to appear and float in the air in front of him. The first was the completely blood-red skyjewel bloodfruit, the second was a snow-white fruit that was covered by swirls of blue energy, and the third was the fruit that shone like a miniature sun. "The major power who built the Azureflower Estate was quite generous. I won a fortune as soon as I entered this place!"

Ning put away the fruit and continued his explorations. Soon, he saw an utterly beautiful arch bridge, below which was a wide stream of flowing water. The water was clear and pristine, but radiated an aura of iciness which caused a layer of white steam to appear above it.

Ning walked onto the arch bridge. He immediately saw that on the other end, atop the distant grasslands a pair of old men were seated facing each other, a chessboard and some chess pieces before them.

"T-there are other cultivators here?!" Ning was stunned. However, the two old men were dressed in exactly the same clothes; both wore grayish-black robes, and they both turned their heads to stare towards Ning's bridge.

"Seniors." Ning immediately bowed towards them. The two elders had restrained their auras, making it so that Ning couldn't secretly investigate them, but when Ning looked at them he felt a sense of incredible danger from them. He knew that if they were to fight, he would probably be at danger of losing his life.

"An outsider has actually arrived in the estate." One of the two gray-robed elders chuckled as he looked at Ning through his two silver eyes. "It's been quite some time since I've seen an outsider."

"Hmph." As for the other gray-robed elder, he had a pair of blood-red eyes. Ning was looking right at him as he stared at Ning, and when their gazes intersected Ning suddenly felt as though he was seeing an endless sea of murder and blood! Ning's heart shivered when he saw that unfathomable amount of hatred and slaughter. Thankfully, Ning's heartforce was quite strong and just a step away from sixth-stage heartforce, and so he was able to safeguard his own heart.

"A mere Daolord of the Second Step?" The blood-eyed elder laughed coldly as he swept out with his sleeves.

BOOM! His sleeves suddenly stretched out through the skies, seeming able to sweep away all things and moving so fast that Ning was unable to dodge it before it reached him and struck at him.

"What's going on?!" Ning had no time to spare. His body immediately blurred as he manifested [Three Heads, Six Arms], and all six of his arms gripped a Northbow sword. His sword-light flashed, then transformed into an enormous black hole. The sky-blotting sleeve lashed down upon Ning's sword-light, and Ning's sword-light began to crack as the black hole

tottered.

BOOM!

Ning could sense a terrifyingly strong concussive force be applied to his entire body, a force so strong as to completely stun Ning. He flew backwards uncontrollably, flying millions of kilometers past the arch bridge before slamming into the ground with a loud booming sound. He actually rolled over a few times on the ground before slowly beginning to regain consciousness.

“W-what...” When Ning came to his senses, he was terrified by the implications of what had just happened. “Even though I had the Hegemon armor protecting me, I was knocked completely senseless for a few moments. Thankfully, my divine body is comparable to a low-grade Eternal weapon. Otherwise, I probably would’ve died even through the Hegemon armor.” Ning couldn’t help but celebrate his survival. The Hegemon armor had once again weakened the attack to one thousandth of its full power, but that old man had been far more powerful than Patriarch Clearwind when the latter had used his forbidden secret arts!

Ning’s guess was that this had been the attack of someone on the Eternal Emperor level. Ordinary Daolords of the Fourth Step would probably be instantly slain by it! Ning himself was only able to survive because of both the Hegemon armor and the fact that his body was incredibly tough as well. Despite that, he had been instantly stunned and dazed by that attack.

“Eh?” Moments ago, the blood-eyed elder had been smirking. Now, however, he revealed a look of astonishment. “He didn’t die? How?! How could a Daolord of the Second Step withstand my killing strike?”

“Kid, get over here. Let me get a good look at you,” the blood-eyed elder spoke out.

“Stay away!” The silver-eyed old man immediately said. “No matter what, don’t step onto that bridge. The area beyond the bridge is forbidden to me and this old man. If you move past it, he’ll definitely attack you again.”

“Big brother!” The blood-eyed elder said angrily, “Whose side are you

on?"

"Second brother, he's just a young Daolord of the Second Step. He can help relieve our boredom for atime. Why must you move to kill him?" The silver-eyed elder was irritated as well. "We are Eternal Emperors, after all. For you to ignore your own status and try to kill a Daolord of the Second Step... have you not noticed that you are going crazy?"

"Emperors? We aren't even cultivators any longer. Emperors? Ahaha..." The blood-eyed elder laughed wildly. He laughed like a madman, and his laughter was filled with endless hatred and pain.

Chapter 27: Withdrawal

The silver-eyed elder's body trembled when he heard this, and a hint of sorrow appeared in his eyes as he let out a sigh. "We still have a chance at gaining our freedom. In addition, the person who caused us to fall to such a state was the master of this estate. It had nothing to do with this young Daolord of the Second Step! Why must you get him involved?"

"The master of the estate? Yes, he's the one who caused all this," the blood-eyed elder howled, "And I know that he's the one we should hate, but what can I possibly do to him? We stand no chance against him whatsoever. He captured us as easily as capturing ants, then transformed us into our current state. I want to take revenge, but I have no chance of succeeding whatsoever. He said that he would give us our freedom once he returned, but how long has it been?! He left more than thirty million chaos cycles ago. He'll probably never be back!"

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On the other side of the arch bridge, Ji Ning was speechless when he heard the conversation between the two. Thirty million chaos cycles? That was an incredibly long period of time! Even Samsara Daolords were only able to live for 108,000 chaos cycles. Eternal Emperors truly were special, capable of living nearly forever.

And, based on the conversation between those two, it seemed as though they had been effortlessly captured by the master of the estate. As they had put it, he had been able to capture them as easily as capturing ants.

"As expected of someone who created the Nine Chaos Seals," Ning mused. "He really is unfathomably powerful and inscrutable. If he was able to so easily capture Eternal Emperors, he probably is at least at the Hegemon level of power. Is it possible that there's an even higher level which he was at?"

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"Kill. KILL. KILL!!! I've fallen so hard, why should I show pity for any others? To be able to discover this estate is indeed a tremendous blessing,

but I'm going to make sure all of those lucky Daolords end up as dead Daolord!" The blood-eyed elder's eyes were blazing with that bloody light as his murderous aura surged towards the skies. "That kid had better never step foot on the bridge again. Otherwise, I'll definitely slaughter him!" His gaze was focused on the distant Ning, and he didn't disguise his murderous intent at all.

"You... ugh. What's the point?" The silver-eyed elder sighed when he saw this. As for the blood-eyed elder, he simply snorted.

"Leave, kid. Given that you were able to stay alive when my second brother delivered a killing blow towards you, you probably are one of the most freakishly talented Daolords of your generation." The silver-eyed elder instructed, "My second brother wishes to stop you, but given your talent you might be able to defeat him once you become a Daolord of the Fourth Step. However, this estate is filled with layers of danger and is much more dangerous than my second brother. I strongly recommend for you to return only after you become an Eternal Emperor yourself."

Ning stared at the two from the other side of the bridge. Both his azureflower seal and his azureflower region were shaking from the powerful resonance. Clearly, the thing which was calling to them was emanating from deep within this estate. But given that two Eternal Emperors were guarding the bridge, and that one was filled with the desire to kill him...

"The difference in power is too great. If I tried to force my way through, he'd probably bind and capture me." Although Ning deeply esired to enter the depths of the Azureflower Estate, the difference in power was quite apparent.

"Go, go," the silver-eyed elder said.

"Kid, even the outside perimeter held three sacred trees. There are even more treasures inside the estate. Don't you want to go in? Ahaha, I'm sure you must." The blood-eyed elder stared at Ning intently. Ning hesitated for a moment, then turned and left. He soon departed from the main gates of the Azureflower Estate.

The blood-eyed elder and the silver-eyed elder both watched as Ning disappeared off into the distance. “The kid is pretty decisive,” the silver-eyed elder praised.

“And what good is that? The master of this estate left behind many fortunes, but he also left behind many dangers. The two of us were nothing more than ants to him, and it was so easy for him to capture us and put us here to serve as his guards. Some of the other Eternal Emperors he caught were much more powerful than us, but all of them were assigned to the deeper parts of the estate.” The blood-eyed elder smirked.

The silver-eyed elder nodded. When he thought about what had happened all those chaos cycles ago, he couldn’t help but once again shiver in fear. They had been the two weakest Eternal Emperors which the master of the estate had caught.

“But that kid was quite talented as well. If he can become an Eternal Emperor, he might just be able to defeat all of the servants which the master of the estate left behind,” the silver-eyed elder said.

“Keep dreaming. Do you know how hard it will be for a freak like him to gain eternity? Hell, if he succeeds he’ll probably become a Hegemon!” The blood-eyed elder shook his head.

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Outside the Azureflower Estate. Ning emerged from the estate feeling both excited as well as impatient. He really wanted to delve deeper into the estate and find the true source of that resonance with his azureflower seal! Alas, he couldn’t even handle the two Eternal Emperors at the outside perimeter.

“I wish to save Yu Wei, but that path will be a difficult one. This estate, however, might just prove to be one of the major fortunes which I will need to succeed.” Ning turned to stare at the azure flower image once more.

This place was indeed a source of tremendous fortune. Ning’s subconscious was whispering to him that if he succeeded in traversing this place, he would undergo a truly earth-shaking transformation. This

place might enable him to ask the most ancient of powers to come and bring Yu Wei back to life.

“Can’t be impatient. Time spent sharpening the axe will be earned back with interest when you go out to chop the wood. I’ll return once I become a Daolord of the Fourth Step,” Ning mused. He didn’t have any confidence in being able to become an Eternal Emperor! This didn’t have anything to do with a weak Dao-heart; rather, it was because far, far too many freakishly talented Daolords had failed in this final step. Ning knew exactly how difficult it was, and it would be even harder for him because his path was that of the Omega Sword Dao. Most likely, it would be far more difficult than the paths which Bertulu, Solewind, and the others were going to walk. For peerless geniuses like them, becoming an Eternal Emperor was incredibly difficult. If they succeeded, they would become Hegemons.

Ning was in control of an Omega Sword Dao. How difficult would his path to eternity be? Still, he was fairly certain in his ability to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step. By then, challenging the Azureflower Estate would be much simpler.

“At least...” Ning stared at the azure flower image floating in front of the gates. “Here, at least, I can see a hope of saving her. The next time I come here, I’ll definitely make it into the depths of the estate.”

Ning left, but when he left his heart was filled with hope.

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The void of the primordial chaos. A flying vessel was advancing through the chaos once more, with Ning seated in the lotus position atop the deck of the vessel, attuning himself to the surrounding area while recording down the various danger zones on the star map in his hands.

Su Youji was seated next to Ning and was pouring his wine for him, a lovely smile on her face. Although trailblazing was somewhat dangerous, it really wasn’t that concerning for someone on Ning’s level. That trip to the Azureflower Estate had been far more dangerous! When Ning had returned from the estate, Su Youji had asked about what he had found.

Ning's response was this: "I nearly died in there."

Su Youji and the others still felt twinges of fear when they thought back to that answer. Now that Ning was back by her side once more, she felt at peace.

"Master, that place was far too dangerous. In the future, you should avoid places that are excessively dangerous," Su Youji said.

"Don't worry. I probably won't go back for a long time," Ning said.

"You shouldn't go at all," Su Youji said hurriedly.

"Next time, I'll be confident in my abilities to survive. For now, I'm not good enough." Ning shook his head. In the Endless Territories, he was definitely one of the major powers now; he had even been able to survive a killing blow from an Eternal Emperor, after all! If word of this spread, his reputation would definitely increase dramatically. However, Ning's goals were much higher than merely this. Not even the most freakishly strong of Daolords would be able to revive an extinguished truesoul, after all.

Time flowed on, and more than thirty years passed in the blink of an eye.

"Haha..." Still seated in the lotus position within the flying vessel, Ning suddenly put down his star map and rose to his feet with a laugh.

"What is it, master?" Pillsaint and Su Youji were both confused.

"The trailblazing is complete. We've arrived." Ning smiled. "I'm familiar with this region. We have now blazed a trail from the Badlands Territory to my homeland."

With his Primaltwin serving as his goal, Ning was able to spent three hundred years to reach the Three Realms without getting lost.

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The primordial chaos outside the Three Realms. Ji Ning's chaos estate.

A white-robed Ji Ning led the peerless beauty Su Youji and Daolord Pillsaint into his chaos estate, where a black-robed Ning was awaiting them.

“T-this...” Su Youji and Pillsaint both had looks of astonishment on their faces. Before coming, they had both sworn oaths never to divulge anything regarding Ning’s homeland to anyone else. The trailblazing, the region of empty space, the Three Realms... they were not permitted to discuss anything they saw. However, they were still stunned by what was before them.

“What’s wrong, Pillsaint, Youji? Don’t you recognize me?” The black-robed Ning laughed.

“A Primaltwin?!” Su Youji and Pillsaint couldn’t help but blurt out these two words. There were very few Daolords who had Primaltwins.

The white-robed Ning waved his hand, causing a painting to fly out and towards the black-robed Ning. This painting contained an estate-world inside of it, and it was filled with the countless secret arts, divine abilities, cultivation techniques, and other techniques which Ning had acquired from Vastheaven Palace. It also contained the various treasures he had obtained from Daolord Blesswind and the other enemies he had faced, along with chaos nectar, chaos jewels, and more. There was at least ten million cubes worth of chaos nectar and chaos jewels here! Ning estimated that this should be enough to establish a solid foundation for the Three Realms.

“It is time for the Three Realms to truly rise to prominence.” Ning nodded.

Chapter 28: Three Realms Archives

The world of the Grand Xia. Swallow Mountain. Brightheart Lake.

Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow were being accompanied by their granddaughter, Ji Brightmoon. They had started to journey through the Three Realms, with even Uncle White travelling alongside them as well. As a result, Brightheart Lake was now a bit quieter than it usually was.

Whoosh! The black-robed Ji Ning suddenly descended from the skies.

“Young master.” Autumn Leaf immediately ran over when she sensed his presence.

“Elder sister Autumn Leaf.” The black-robed Ning smiled merrily as he called out to her. “Where are Little Qing and Xiaoyu?”

“The two of them went out to have some fun as well. I have no idea where they went,” Autumn Leaf said.

“All of them have gone out. Why don’t you join them, elder sister?” Ning continued, “Don’t stay at Brightheart Island all the time.”

“Someone has to stay on the island. Who knows when you might end up paying a visit?” Autumn Leaf smiled. “See? You ended up paying a visit today.”

Ning chuckled. There were some words that didn’t need to be said. Autumn Leaf had taken care of him ever since he was small, and the two were even closer than actual siblings.

“Come with me, elder sister.” As Ning spoke, he began to walk towards the inner depths of Brightheart Island. Autumn Leaf followed from behind, and they quickly arrived at one of the inner mountains on the island. Ning stood there halfway up the mountain, then gestured with his hand. Whoosh! A seemingly ordinary Immortal estate suddenly descended upon the mountain.

“Mm.” Ning stared at the gates to the Immortal estate. Moments later, three words suddenly appeared directly above the gates: Three Realms Archives.

"What's this?" Autumn Leaf was a bit puzzled by what she was seeing.

"From this day forth, this shall be the most important place in all the Three Realms," Ning said. "This place is filled with countless techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts. All of them are quite formidable, and those who are weak will find it difficult to understand them."

"Come forth." Ning waved his hand. Instantly, a muscular golem wielding a shield suddenly appeared. This was Moksha, the golem comparable to a Daolord of the Third Step which Ning had captured when he was in the Sacred Immortal Realm.

"Master." The golem immediately called out with respect. After breaking through to become a Daolord, Ji Ning had defeated and tamed even the four golems which Emperor Mirrorsnow had bestowed unto him. This completely convinced Moksha of Ji Ning's power.

"Your appearance will scare everyone on my island. Change into the appearance of an ordinary cultivator," Ning ordered with a laugh.

"Yes." Moksha's body instantly blurred as he transformed into a bald, gray-robed man.

Ning nodded. "From this day forth, you shall guard the Three Realms Archives! No one is permitted to enter this place unless I have given them permission. This woman here is my elder sister, Autumn Leaf. She is permitted to enter the archives and study all of the techniques within it whenever she wishes."

"Young master, you can't just do whatever you want. This will be an important place for all the Three Realms," Autumn Leaf said hastily.

"I am the creator of the Three Realms Archives. So what if I decide to let you view everything in it right now? Just don't teach its contents to others," Ning said. "Right now, there is no specific system or rules for studying in the Three Realms Archives. Later, I'll chat with my master and set down a few rules. When there are no rules, there's no such thing as rule-breaking. Later on, though, all of you including Brightmoon and my parents will have to abide by the rules."

"I understand that much." Autumn Leaf nodded. Even Ning's closest family members would have to follow some basic rules. However, they would definitely be given the most latitude, with virtually all of the techniques available for them to study. The only true rule was that they couldn't teach these techniques to others without a good reason!

This was how things worked in any organization within the Endless Territories. Once your secret techniques were taught to others, it was very possible that unforeseeable and uncontrollable developments would occur.

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"T-This place... this is a sacred place for studying the Dao." After Patriarch Subhuti flipped through several of the techniques, he ended up being consumed by them for several days before he regained his normal clarity of mind. The first thing he did was let out an excited sigh.

"Vastheaven Palace built up this collection over the course of countless years. Even in the Endless Territories, a repository like this would be considered a sacred place for cultivators." Ning smiled. "There are enough techniques here for someone to train all the way to the Samsara Daolord level without pausing. The Three Realms is just a single chaosworld, after all, and I suspect only a few will end up reaching the World level. In the end, very few of us shall end up as Samsara Daolords. I trust that those who do will venture into the Endless Territories and seek out their own fortunes there."

"Right." Subhuti's face was covered with joy. "The Three Realms' future is absolutely unimaginable. Haha! My disciple, you have established a foundation for the Three Realms. I once thought that after Mother Nuwa left, she would eventually return to us and help us. Who would've thought that you got it done before she did?"

Ning said, "I wasn't able to find any trace of Mother Nuwa in the Endless Territories, and the Badlands Territory and the surrounding territories haven't seen any powerful female cultivators similar to her appear. My guess is that when she left the Three Realms through that vortex

passageway, she was suddenly trapped into a spatial breach that teleported her to a foreign location.

Mother Nuwa, despite having no guidance and no good techniques, had been able to develop her own technique and force her way into becoming a World Goddess! She was definitely every bit as talented as Ji Ning. Once she reached the greater world outside the Three Realms, just a few simple pointers would result in her powers skyrocketing. Logically speaking, she should've become a Samsara Daolord long ago. And yet, Ning had found no trace of her whatsoever.

Subhuti had a worried look on his face as well. "Everything is up to destiny. Ugh. For Elder Gods and Ancestral Immortals, passage through the vortex tunnel will result in almost certain death. Even World Gods will be trapped within spatial tears if they aren't lucky. We can't just let our cultivators be trapped here in the Three Realms forever, can we?"

"Do not worry, Master. I spent a few years and used my ability to sense my Primaltwin's location to blaze a trail from the Badlands Territory to the Three Realms." Ning smiled as he took out a star map. "Please take a look, Master."

"From the Badlands Territory to the Three Realms?" Subhuti revealed a look of surprised joy, hurriedly taking the map from Ning's hands. He was so excited by what he saw, even his white beard began to flutter as he began to roar with laughter. "Disciple, with this route through space the cultivators of our Three Realms shall be able to enter the Endless Territories. Windfiend and I were worrying about this matter just a short while ago. The two of us were planning to explore the Endless Territories after we break through to the World level, but we were worrying about that vortex."

"Oh, right." Subhuti immediately said, "This star map is extremely important. Every single person who views it must swear a lifeblood oath to never divulge the existence of the trail you have blazed to others."

"I absolutely agree," Ning said. "It's entirely possible that I might make powerful enemies as I wander through the Endless Territories! Once the

Three Realms are revealed, they might suffer reprisals from certain crazed enemies of mine.”

There were some Daolords who were borderline insane, especially the ones who had failed their Daomerge. They would engage in slaughter on such a scale that they might wipe out all of the living things in multiple territories. This wasn’t unheard of! By comparision, wiping out Ning’s homeland in order to take revenge on him was nothing.

“Mm.” Subhuti nodded solemnly.

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Ning and Subhuti discussed this matter, then set down the rules for allowing the Three Realms to be able to continue to propagate stably in the future. Subhuti and Windfiend both spent a hundred years reading through the Three Realms Archives, and they benefited greatly from it. Finally, they were going to break through to the World level! They could’ve broken through long ago, but the techniques, divine abilities, and secret arts inside the Three Realms Archives were simply too alluring, which is why they delayed for a period of time.

First had come Pangu, Nuwa, and Ning. Now, both Subhuti and Windfiend took that next step and reached the World level. Just a few decades after reaching the World level, they decided to leave the Three Realms together via the route through the primordial chaos which Ning had created to the Badlands Territory.

“Master. Windfiend.” Many of the Immortals and Fiengods of the Three Realms had come to bid them farewell. As for the black-robed Ning, he said, “The Endless Territories are filled with endless dangers. World-level cultivators are not yet at a level where they can go wherever they want. I recommend you stay in the territories around the Badlands Territory for now and temper yourselves first.”

“Don’t worry. I heard that the Badlands Territory has nearly a hundred thousand chaosworlds as well as many ruins left behind by Daolords. That’ll be more than enough for us to roam through,” Subhuti laughed.

“One of us is a master of spacetime, the other is a master of space. We

two old farts might not be particularly talented in other areas, but if we work together we should be able to keep ourselves alive,” Windfiend laughed as well.

The two were both very relaxed. The reason why they had nearly fought to the death in the Three Realms was primarily because Old Man Yuan and Lord Demonheart had been causing trouble in secret. Windfiend had wanted to go out exploring long ago, and Subhuti was also filled with this same desire. Long ago, back when Ning had been very weak, the two had already reached the apex of power; one was the number one spacetime master of the Three Realms, the other was the fastest person in the Three Realms. By now, they had reached even higher levels. If they joined forces, there really were very few World-level cultivators capable of killing them.

“Have a safe journey.”

“Be careful, Subhuti.”

“Master.”

The Immortals and Fiendgods all bade them farewell, then watched as they began their journey into the outside world.

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Time flowed on.

A flying vessel was soaring through the primordial chaos, with Ning’s true body at the helm. After blazing a path to the Three Realms and handing the archives over to his Primaltwin, he had left and led Su Youji and Pillsaint to the next part of their journey. By now, they had spent over a thousand years on this trip to the nearby Sacred City of the Dao Alliance.

“Right. We should arrive in a bit over two hundred years.” Ning sat on the deck of his flying vessel, staring forwards into the endless void before them.

“Master.” Su Youji suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

“Hm? No longer training?” Ning looked at her.

"I can sense that I am about to break through and become a Daolord of the Second Step." A hint of excitement was on Su Youji's face. "Although I wasn't as impressive as you, I was still pretty fast, right?"

Chapter 29: The Sacred City of Skywood

Ji Ning blinked, then laughed. “Not bad! I’ll find a place to let you break through in peace.”

“Right.” Su Youji nodded quite joyfully. As for Ning, he felt rather speechless. Oh, Youji... you are breaking through to become a Daolord of the Second Step, but your master is still just a Daolord of the First Step...

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A short while later, the flying vessel reached a fairly nearby chaos planet, then descended upon it. Ji Ning waved his hand, setting up a simple restrictive formation around the planet. Ning was now on a completely different level of power compared to the past; he would now be extremely powerful even compared to other Daolords, and to encounter a worthy opponent in this region of the primordial chaos was fairly unlikely.

“What?! Youji is about to make her breakthrough?” Pillsaint had a look of astonishment on his face.

“Right.” Ning nodded. “So you have to work hard as well.”

Pillsaint nodded repeatedly. “I need to refine more pills in order to improve my Dao of Alchemy, but to gain insights from repeated, actual alchemy attempts will require quite some time. Still... since both you and Youji have made breakthroughs already, I really do need to pick up the pace.”

“Samsara Daolords... with each step we take, we walk the line between life and death. Do not be rash or push too hard to make a breakthrough. Speed isn’t the most important thing.” Ning said a few words, then fell silent. Ugh. Judging from the situation, he would probably be slower than both of his subordinates.

Whoosh.

Ning waved his hand, causing an enormous boulder to fly off of a distant mountain of the chaos planet. The boulder landed in front of Ning, who simply looked at it. Crack! The boulder was sheared flat. Ning then sat

down in the lotus position atop the boulder, beginning to meditate.

"In the past thousand years, I've only been able to improve my Blood Drop sword-intent slightly." Ning chuckled self-deprecatingly. "It seems I really am going to be slower than both Youji and Pillsaint." He had to improve in all five of his original Supreme Daos and then recombine them once more into a new Omega Sword Dao; this was how his Omega Dao would improve.

Ning's eyelids slowly swung shut, but streaks of sword-light could be seen flickering through the cracks of his lidded eyes. Tiny spatial tears repeatedly appeared and disappeared within a few meters of him as well. Clearly, Ning was visualizing and training in sword-arts.

A long while later...

BOOM! A wind arose in the skies above the chaos planet, and an awesome vortex of chaos energy began to form and be absorbed by Su Youji ni large quantities. Clearly, her breakthrough had begun. Pillsaint watched intently, but Ning simply considered to meditate in the lotus position, continuing to visualize his sword-arts.

This breakthrough took more than three days before everything became calm once more.

"Master." Su Youji put away her Immortal estate and walked over.

"Haha, you really are different now that you've reached the second step. You've actually become even more beautiful!" The nearby Pillsaint whooped in delight. He truly had the heart of a child, and becoming a Daolord hadn't changed him one bit. It was actually because of his pure, guileless heart that he had been able to become a Daolord. The [Seven Leafpill Chapters] had assisted him, but at the core was his own Dao-heart.

Su Youji glanced at Pillsaint, and the latter was instantly enraptured. "Pillsaint, address me as 'big sister'." Su Youji continued to stare sweetly at Pillsaint.

"Big sister... big sis-" The spellbound Pillsaint suddenly came back to his

senses, then pointed at Su Youji and stammered, “H-Hey...”

Su Youji said smugly, “Pillsaint, it seems your Dao-heart isn’t strong enough yet.”

“Oh man. I am doomed. I was enraptured almost instantly. I am going to be in so much trouble in the future.” A miserable look was on Pillsaint’s face.

“It isn’t that Pillsaint has a weak Dao-heart, it’s that he’s still just a Daolord of the First Step.” Ning arose from his boulder, then stepped down. “Pillsaint’s path is the Dao of Alchemy, which means he will indeed be a bit weaker in combat. You, on the other hand, have the legacy of Feixian the Exalted. It would be laughable if you couldn’t enspell a Daolord of the First Step despite having reached the second step. But Youji, you really shouldn’t do that to Pillsaint too often.”

“I know, I know. I was just excited because I broke through.” Su Youji nodded repeatedly, then looked towards Ning with some excitement. “Master, why don’t you give my charm skills a try?”

Ning revealed a smile. “Go ahead and try.”

Su Youji immediately said, “Then Master, you must...” Halfway through her words, she immediately used her secret arts. She had already been beautiful enough to cause the downfall of kingdoms. Now, her smile made her eyes look like the most enchanting things in the universe. Her gaze was unfathomably deep, making it so that Ning couldn’t help but be drawn to them. Even if he wasn’t, those beautiful eyes seemed to be imprinted onto his mind, stirring and beguiling his inner heart...

Ning’s gaze slowly grew more and more distant.

“Master,” Su Youji said softly, “Come here and take Youji into your arms.”

“Yeah...” Ning mumbled softly, and Su Youji revealed a look of excitement.

“Yeah, no thanks.” Ning stared at her. “Is this what you were trying to accomplish by trying to charming your master!?”

Ning's soul was comparable to that of a Daolord of the Fourth Step, and his heartforce made him superior to many. He was at the cusp of breaking through to the sixth stage of heartforce; just a few slight improvements would result in him becoming a true Heartforce Cultivator. How could a newly ascended Daolord of the Second Step like Su Youji possibly shake his will? However, Ning could sense how truly formidable these secret arts of Feixian the Exalted were. Most likely, once Su Youji became a Daolord of the Third Step she would be able to have a slight affect on Ning for a very brief period of time.

If she reached the fourth step... Su Youji as a Daolord of the Fourth Step would be truly frightening! And yet, this path held both strengths and weaknesses, with the weaknesses being quite obvious; if she encountered a Heartforce Cultivator, she would be in serious trouble.

"I could sense that I wasn't able to beguile you, so I just wanted to joke around with you a bit, Master," Su Youji explained hurriedly. She then mumbled to herself, "Can't I even make a joke?"

"Alright, alright. Time to head out. We're pretty closed to the Sacred City," Ning said with a laugh. "Joking around now is fine, but don't cause any trouble once we enter the Sacred City. That is one of the eight Sacred Cities of the Dao Alliance, after all."

"Understood."

"Don't worry, Master."

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Ning once more began to advance with Pillsaint and Su Youji in tow. They travelled for another two hundred-plus years, then finally reached the fabled city of Skywood, one of the eight Sacred Cities.

"So that's Skywood." Ning stared off into the distance. Although Skywood was described as a 'city', it didn't have any walls. It was actually a collection of staggeringly large edifices which hovered together above the clouds! It was filled with towering palaces, ancient estates, and strange buildings. Every single building glowed with the light of restrictive spells, causing it to radiate with a plethora of colors.

Most dazzling of all were the completely jade-green city gates, which were three million meters tall. Quite a few figures could be seen soaring through the clouds and into the gates, with some figures flitting into the various palaces and estates.

“One of the eight Sacred Cities.” Pillsaint was rather excited. “It reigns over or directly influences tens of thousands of nearby territories. I hear that an enormous number of Daolords are here.”

“Normally, Skywood City sees over ten thousand Daolords at any given point in time,” Ning said.

In terms of raw numbers of Daolords? The Ancient cultivators, the Brightshore Kingdom, the Aeonian race, the Aberrant special lifeforms... no one could compete with the Dao Alliance in this area. Any of the eight Sacred Cities of the Dao Alliance held more Daolords than any of the other organizations held in their main headquarters.

The Brightshore Kingdom’s Twelve Palaces had thousands of Daolords (excluding the black-armored ones), but most of them were outside adventuring, and so only a few hundred powerful Daolords were actually within the borders of the Brightshore Kingdom at any point in time. Skywood City, however, held more than ten thousand cultivators who were training in seclusion... and this represented just a tiny fraction of Skywood’s total area of influence.

If all of the Daolords of the tens of thousands of nearby territories were gathered together, there would probably be far more of them! The vast majority of Daolords were wandering the outside world or in their own sects, after all. Only a small amount were within Skywood City.

“Skywood City is controlled by one of the nine great sects of the Dao Alliance, the Skywood Sect,” Ning said. “This place is operated in accordance with the laws of the Skywood Sect.”

“The eight Sacred Cities are all quite interesting.” Pillsaint laughed. “Eight Sacred Cities which are under the control of nine different organizations. The Dao Alliance really is rather chaotic.”

“Master, I hear that the governor of Skywood City is also the sect leader

of the Skywood Sect, the legendary Emperor Skywood, right?" Su Youji asked curiously. Eternal Emperor Skywood was extremely famous, and she had heard of him long ago in the Brightshore Kingdom.

Ning chuckled and nodded. On the surface, the Dao Alliance had a total of eight mighty Emperors who were the governors of these eight Sacred Cities. However...

Even the likes of the Brightshore Kingdom and the Aeonians had multiple Eternal Emperors, despite being far smaller organizations. Could the exalted Dao Alliance truly have just eight Eternal Emperors? Who would possibly believe such a thing? However, the eight governors of the Sacred Cities had lived for countless chaos cycles and had reigned over their respective Sacred Cities. Without question, they were incredibly strong even amongst Eternal Emperors.

Not even the most powerful of Eternal Emperors were able to shake the positions of the eight governors! Not only were the governors themselves powerful and given great authority within the Dao Alliance, they were also secretly supported by many reclusive old experts. This was why they were referred to as being the nine major organizations which reigned over the Dao Alliance.

Chapter 30: Ji Ning's Goal

The gates of the Sacred City were towering and dazzling to behold. Ji Ning's group of three flew straight towards the gates. In truth, Skywood City had no walls at all, and so there was no real reason to go through the gates. However, this was the first time Ning's group had ever come to a Sacred City, and they needed to procure a Dao Alliance talisman. Otherwise, they wouldn't be considered true members of the Dao Alliance and would be forbidden entry into many places within the Sacred Cities.

"Fellow Daoists." There was an unprepossessing little pavilion right outside the doors, and a black-robed woman immediately walked out of it with a smile on her face.

"This is our first trip to the Sacred City. We would like to pick up a Dao Alliance talisman," Ning said. The black-robed woman before him had a very weak aura; most likely, she had relied on a Pseudo Samsara Pill in order to break through to become a Daolord of the First Step. Daolords like her would generally be given fairly menial tasks within the larger organizations and sects.

"Oh, a Dao Alliance talisman? Please follow me." The black-robed woman guided Ning into the pavilion. Within were a number of white-robed men and women, as well as a few alien Outsiders. Judging from their auras, they were at most at the World level.

"Where have the three of you come from, and what school do you belong to? Are you already registered with the Dao Alliance?" The black-robed woman asked.

"I am Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace," Ning said while producing his Vastheaven Palace medallion. The black-robed nodded, then waved her hand and produced a little book. She flipped through the book, quickly verifying some information about Daolord Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace.

"Fellow Daoist Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace, here is your Dao Alliance talisman." The black-robed woman produced a black talisman

and handed it over to Ning, with the talisman having the word ‘Dao’ atop it. It was covered in divine runes that seemed quite mysterious and which ensured the talisman could only be bound once. Ning waved his hand, binding it to him.

“Are these two registered with us already as well?” The black-robed woman asked. Ning shook his head and replied, “They are not. These two are my retainers.”

“Retainers?” The black-robed woman and the nearby World-level cultivators all glanced at Ning with surprise. He had two Daolords as retainers? It seemed as though this ordinary-looking Daolord Darknorth was actually quite an extraordinary figure! They naturally knew nothing of Ning’s battle against Patriarch Clearwind, as neither Vastheaven Palace nor Clearwind Temple had publicized that battle. As a result, very few knew about it.

“If you aren’t already registered with the Dao Alliance, things will be slightly more complicated,” the black-robed woman said. “Please follow me. We need to take some steps to ensure that no spies are able to make their way into the Dao Alliance.”

“I understand.” Su Youji smiled. She and Pillsaint both obediently followed after the black-robed woman. They knew coming here what the rules would be.

Ning’s history was very clean, and Vastheaven Palace had already vouched for him. As a result, he was easily able to acquire a Dao Alliance talisman and be acknowledged as a formal member of the Dao Alliance. As for unknown figures without any backers, they would need to be investigated and swear certain lifeblood oaths to prove their ‘innocence’ before they would be given a Dao Alliance talisman.

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A short while later, a white-robed elder led Ning’s group of three away from the city gates. The four flew through the clouds, and the white-robed man smiled at them. “Seniors, this is your first trip to a Sacred City, so I will explain a bit regarding the rules here. There are restrictive wards and

barriers surrounding all of the palaces and estates inside the Sacred City, and you are forbidden from violence within them. If you engage in violence, you shall perish and your Dao shall vanish.”

Ning and the others simply listened. These were iron rules which no one could breach. This was one of the eight Sacred Cities of the Dao Alliance, after all; no one could violate these rules, unless they had the power to challenge the entire Dao Alliance and live to tell the tale.

“Once you leave the protective wards around those various palaces and estates, no one will get involved no matter how violent the battle becomes.” The white-robed elder chuckled. “For example, the four of us are in midair right now. This airspace is not covered by the barriers or wards of any estate, and so we could theoretically be attacked at any moment.”

“How chaotic,” Pillsaint sighed.

“It is a bit chaotic. Wherever there are cultivators, there will always be chaos,” the white-robed elder said. “Also – please remember this, seniors. In Skywood City, the disciples of the Skywood Sect are not to be trifled with, not even the True Gods or Elder Gods. If you kill a member of the Skywood Sect, then you will also be put to death and your Dao shall vanished.”

Su Youji asked, “How can we tell if someone belongs to the Skywood Sect?”

“That’s very easy.” The white-robed elder smiled. “Members of the Skywood Sect are all dressed in unique robes that emanate the unique aura of the Skywood tree. If for some reason they aren’t wearing their robes and they end up being killed, their killers won’t be blamed.”

Ning and the others nodded. The Skywood tree was the sacred tree that stood guard over the entire Skywood Sect. It served as the foundation for the entire sect! Ning and the others were now able notice that there was indeed a unique, ancient, and eternal aura radiating from the robes of the Skywood Sect disciples they had met thus far. It was immediately recognizable.

“Let me tell you a bit more about the important places within Skywood City. Those hundred thousand-plus estates hovering in the air over there all for cultivators to dwell in. They belong to our Skywood Sect, and the three of you can spend a bit of chaos nectar if you wish to temporarily take up residence in one of them. It’ll be fine even if you want to stay for a hundred chaos cycles; all you need to do is pay a bit of rent in the form of chaos nectar. No one will ever dare to disturb you.” The white-robed elder pointed off into the distance, where there was a group of ancient palaces that radiated mighty auras. “That region over there is where our Skywood Sect is located, and the Eternal Emperor resides there as well. No matter what, you must not trespass there.”

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The white-robed elder introduced one place after another to the group.

“We’ll go over there.” Ning pointed at a distant hall that was constructed within the clouds.

“The Spellworld?” The white-robed elder was startled.

“Yes, we shall go to the Spellworld first,” Ning said.

The Spellworld contained countless techniques within it. Every single one of the eight Sacred Cities of the Dao Alliance contained a Spellworld within it, and cultivators of the Dao Alliance were permitted to learn many precious techniques and divine abilities within those Spellworlds for a fee. There were even techniques belonging to Eternal Emperors... and supposedly, Hegemons as well! However, the more rare a technique was, the greater a price one would need to pay to learn it. Nothing in this world was free.

“The Spellworld contains countless techniques. You can choose from them as you please.” A guardian golem was standing in front of the hall, and it said in a calm voice, “Come speak to me after you have chosen.”

“This guardian golem was left here by the Dao Alliance. It is incredibly powerful,” the white-robed elder said immediately. In the end, golems were more loyal than anyone or anything else. If they were assigned to guard a place, they would never allow even the slightest of slip-ups.

"Pillsaint, Youji, the two of you should go inside and take a look as well. See if there's anything you need. I'm going to enter now." Ning immediately strode in after finishing his words.

"Sure, let's take a look inside."

"Let's see what this place has to offer." Both Su Youji and Pillsaint followed Ning inside.

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When Ning stepped into the hall, he felt space twisting around him as though he was entering a different world. This was a world with canyons, with rivers, with towering mountains, and with waterfalls.

Jade scrolls were lying on boulders, floating in the air above deserts, hanging from tree branches, and scattered throughout the world in a casual fashion. This was a world created by an ancient power of the Dao Alliance, and it was quite mysterious and profound.

"Not this one. Nor this one. Nope, not this one either..." Ning stood there at the top of a mountain, stretching out his godsense as he began to scan through the various jade slips. Every single jade slip contained some basic information regarding the techniques which were available as well as the price one needed to pay! Ordinary techniques could be purchased by using a bit of chaos nectar, but truly core techniques were much more difficult to procure.

"Here it is!" Ning suddenly revealed a look of delight. Swoosh! Ning's body flickered as he instantly flew from the mountain peak to a prairie that was tens of thousands of kilometers away. There was a thatched cottage on this prairies, and there were nine jade slips that had been casually tossed inside that cottage.

These nine scrolls were the [Novessence Water], [Novessence Fire], [Novessence Wood], [Novessence Earth], [Novessence Metal], [Novessence Wind], [Novessence Thunder], [Novessence Light], and [Novessence Void].

"That's what I need. As a new Daolord, these are the secret arts which fit

me perfectly.” ‘Ning nodded slowly. Although he had gained the secret arts left behind by the deceased Sword Hegemon, it was far too hard for him to make any headway into them. Even if he put all of his efforts into training in them, for now it would be very hard for him to reach a high level of power in them. The nine secret arts created by Daolord Allgod, however, were a perfect fit for Ning.

He had the azureflower mist energy and the [Seven Leafpill Chapters]. This made it so that Ning was able to easily train in the various novessence techniques. He had already been able to reach the level of septessence thunder, and the only thing holding him back was him not having the other types of Dao lightning he needed.

“If I can master the full [Novessence Thunder], I should be able to slay most Verge-level Daolords with it! If I can merge all nine secret arts together, even the likes of Patriarch Clearwind would probably die. Even if he survived, he would be very heavily wounded.” Ning knew that training in the nine novessence arts was the best choice for him right now, which was why he had spent a thousand years hastening to Skywood City.

Daolord Allgod’s nine secret arts were only purchasable within the Dao Alliance. The Brightshore Kingdom had only been able to purchase the five weaker secret arts, with the [Novessence Thunder], [Novessence Wind], [Novessence Light], and the most powerful [Novessence Void] techniques all missing.

Ning glanced at the various techniques, feeling a sense of joy in his heart. These were the nine secret arts which Daolord Allgod had painstakingly created, and when they were used together they were capable of truly unearthly levels of power.

“I’m going to buy them all.” Ning waved his hand, collecting all nine jade slips.

Chapter 31: Killer Technique, the Nine Novessence Arts

Of the nine novessence arts, Ji Ning had already acquired the [Novessence Thunder] and the [Novessence Water]; there was no need to purchase them. He only needed to buy the other seven.

The [Novessence Void] required five million cubes.

The [Novessence Wind] and the [Novessence Light] each cost 1.5 million cubes.

The [Novessence Fire], [Novessence Earth], and the others were all fairly cheap, and the price was the same as it had been in the Brightshore Kingdom – a million cubes.

In total, the cost was twelve million cubes!

"Let's see if there are any other techniques that are a good fit for me." Ning continued his search. The nine novessence arts of Daolord Allgod weren't weak, but they weren't overpoweringly strong either. This was because, even trained to the absolute apex, the techniques were not able to kill an ordinary Eternal Emperor; at most, they would be able to suppress him! The secret arts which the Hegemon had given Ning, however, were able to slay Eternal Emperors. The problem was that it was too hard to train in them.

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Ning picked up those seven scrolls, then spent another three days wandering through the Spellworld. This truly broadened his horizons and let him understand how many formidable techniques there truly were. It really was true that the Brightshore Kingdom could not come close to comparing to the Dao Alliance in terms of number of techniques. The countless generations of Dao Alliance experts had left behind plenty of techniques that were far more powerful than the nine novessence arts.

Still, for the present Ji Ning, the nine novessence arts were indeed still the most appropriate art for him to train in, and they would allow him to

unleash the maximum level of power possible.

"Why didn't you spend more time inside?" When Ning exited the Spellworld, he saw Su Youji and Pillsaint waiting for him at the entrance.

"There really weren't many techniques or spells that we need. Two or three days was plenty," Pillsaint said.

"The two of us already have our own techniques which we haven't finished training in," Su Youji said.

Pillsaint was focused in alchemy, and the first six chapters of the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] truly was more than enough for him to train in for a long period of time. The same was true for Su Youji. "Master, have you finished choosing your techniques?" Su Youji asked curiously.

"I have." Ning walked to the guardian golem, then waved his hand and produced those seven jade scrolls. The golem turned its flaming gaze towards those jade slips, then said calmly, "These seven secret arts will cost a total of twelve million cubes of chaos nectar."

"That much?" Su Youji and Pillsaint were both speechless.

"Take it." Ning produced a jade bottle. The guardian golem accepted it, examined it, then nodded as it waved a finger towards the seven jade slips. Instantly, layers of light appeared on the surface of the seven jade slips; the restrictive spells over them had been temporarily removed.

Ning immediately sent his godsense into the jade slips. He first swore a lifeblood oath not to teach them to anyone else, then began to memorize all seven of them.

"I've finished memorizing them." Ning returned the seven jade slips back to the golem.

"Good." The golem accepted the slips, then waved its hand and caused the restrictive spells to reappear. The golem then gave them a toss, returning them into the Spellworld.

"Let's go." Ning was in quite high spirits.

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The World-level white-robed elder belonging to the Skywood Sect had been waiting for them this entire time, and he now continued to lead the way.

"How many places which sell magic treasures does Skywood City have?" Ning asked.

"The best one is naturally the Plumesoar Hall belonging to our Skywood Sect," the white-robed elder said hurriedly. Engaging in the trade of magic treasures could result in significant profits. Daolords would often risk their lives for a few million cubes, but the auction halls of the eight Sacred Cities earned ridiculous profits every day with comparatively little risk. But of course, in the eight Sacred Cities ordinary organizations weren't even qualified to enter this lucrative trade.

"My question was 'how many,'" Ning repeated. The white-robed elder said resignedly, "Three in total. The first one is the Plumesoar Hall of our Skywood Sect. The other two places are the Blackwater Pavilion and the Universal Treasures Hall. However, this place is Skywood City; as a result, our Plumesoar Hall has far more treasures than the other two places."

"Then let's go to the Plumesoar Hall," Ning said with a chuckle. Now that he had the secret arts, he needed to buy the treasures necessary to train in them. He was still lacking in Dao lightning and Dao water, for example!

"Plumesoar Hall of our Skywood Sect is over there." The white-robed elder pointed towards the extremely beautiful, nine-storied tower which rose up into the clouds. An aura of light rose up thirty thousand meters above the tower, and it was protected by layers of protective spells. The Plumesoar Hall was the place where the Skywood Sect stored its countless treasures. It naturally was tightly protected.

"Plumesoar Hall often holds treasure auctions. There will be another one roughly a month from now," the white-robed elder said. "You can go take a look when the time comes."

"No need for the treasure auction." Ning flew straight towards Plumesoar Hall.

Places like Waveshift City of the Badlandss Territory rarely held treasure auctions, but this was Skywood City, one of the eight Sacred Cities of the Dao Alliance. Plumesoar Hall, Blackwater Pavilion, and the Universal Treasures Hall would hold one every so often.

After Ning flew past the protective barriers, he could sense a flood of treasure auras sweep towards him like a tidal wave.

"There really is a mountain of treasures here." Ning took a glance past the main gates of Plumesoar Hall. He saw an utterly amazing number of magic treasures inside the hall, far more than ten times as much as much as any of the Twelve Palaces of the Brightshore Kingdom. In terms of raw quality, the Dao Alliance had far more of everything than anyone else, be it cultivators, treasures, or techniques.

"Pillsaint, Youji. Now that you have broken through to become Daolords, you'll need good treasures so that you can unleash your full potential," Ning said. "Go buy whatever you need, but keep it under five million cubes."

"Five million cubes?" Pillsaint and Su Youji were both rather shocked.

"Don't be shy. Pillsaint, you are an alchemist; you not only need a good alchemy cauldron, you also need many valuable ingredients. Otherwise, how can you improve?" Ning continued, "Youji, you are now fairly powerful, but if you have suitable treasures you can become even more powerful."

The two had sworn to follow him unto death itself; they would be his eternal retainers. There was no way Ning could be too stingy with them, now that he had sufficient resources. If it wasn't for the fact that he needed a lot of resources in order to train in the nine novessence arts, he probably would've been even more generous with them.

"Go on in." Ning immediately entered the Plumesoar Hall. The conversation between the three had been a silent mental discussion as they didn't wish for the white-robed elder to overhear it.

"Seniors, I'm going to leave now. If there's anything you need, you can seek out the attendants within the Plumesoar Hall," the white-robed elder

said loudly. His main mission had been to send these three to the Plumesoar Hall and ensure that they made a good amount of money off the three.

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The Plumesoar Hall contained everything within it. Beautiful women were as common as the clouds, and although they weren't as beautiful as Su Youji they were still dazzlingly and beguiling. Magic treasures and unique items were everywhere, the cheapest being a few hundred cubes and the most expensive ones being priceless!

"Senior, what do you wish to purchase? The Plumesoar Hall has accumulated countless treasures over endless chaos cycles. We have everything here." A female attendant was standing next to Ning. She had some red fur on her face, but that just made her look even more bewitching.

"This is the list of treasures which I need." Ning produce a jade slip, then handed it over. "Let me know what the price will be."

The dazzling female attendant smiled as she accepted the jade slip, then sent her godsense into it. When she did, her face turned pale. She couldn't help but raise her head to look at Ning. What an impressive fellow! He was apparently a Daolord of the Second Step, but he wished to purchase this many valuable treasures? All combined, this had to be tens of millions of cubes!

"I'll go make some inquiries. Please wait for a while, senior," the attendant said in a soft voice. She then departed to go make the report to her superiors.

As for Ning, he spent some time casually strolling through the Plumesoar Hall and admiring its many treasures. His list had included all of the precious treasures needed for training in all nine novessence arts. And of course, he already had seven types of Dao lightning and Dao water. The main issue was that the ones Ning had were the cheaper ones; in the Brightshore Kingdom, the most expensive type of Dao lightning, the Felworld lightning, needed 1.9 million cubes of chaos nectar! The two

types of Dao lightning and Dao water which Ning needed were the most expensive ones. As for the other seven novessence arts, he needed everything!

“Fellow Daoist.” A silver-robed Daolord walked over. When he saw Ning, he sent a mental message to him. “You really need a large number of magic treasures. However, Plumesoar Hall can provide everything you need.”

“Mm.” Ning nodded. These items existed in the Brightshore Kingdom as well. Ning wasn’t surprised that the Skywood Sect, the ruler of one of the eight Sacred Cities, was also able to procure them. “How much chaos nectar will it cost?” Ning asked.

“Some of the Chaos fire and Chaos wind, we can just give to you as gifts. The others, though... in total, it’ll cost roughly 38 million cubes of chaos nectar.” The silver-robed Daolord looked at Ning. He was actually quite curious; would a Daolord of the Second Step really be able to produce that much? It must be understood that even when Vastheaven Palace extorted Patriarch Clearwind for his treasures, it had only been able to gain roughly twenty million cubes.”

“That’s too expensive.” Ning shook his head. “I could purchase these things in the Brightshore Kingdom for less than that.”

“The Brightshore Kingdom?” The silver-robed Daolord was startled. He immediately said, “Then how about 36 million cubes? This is a very low price; I think you know, fellow Daoist, what the rough price for these things are.”

Ning was secretly speechless. If he had purchased these items in the Brightshore Kingdom, the price would have indeed been around 36 million cubes.

“I’ll go pay a visit to the Blackwater Pavilion and the Universal Treasure Hall first. I have to find the best price, of course,” Ning said.

The silver-robed Daolord’s face twitched slightly.

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After haggling for a period of time, they ended up settling on the price of 34 million cubes! There was some competition amongst the three markets, after all; it was indeed possible to lower the price substantially.

"All your treasures are ready. Fellow Daoist, you can simply pay me in chaos nectar." The silver-robed Daolord looked at Ning.

"Do you accept payment in precious minerals?" Ning suddenly asked.

"Minerals?" The silver-robed Daolord was startled.

Ning nodded. "Right. Minerals. For example, darkspace flamestone." Ning didn't really want to do this, but all of his chaos nectar and chaos jewels combined was not enough to reach the price of 34 million cubes."

Chapter 32: What The Hell?

Although the deceased Sword Hegemon had left him fifty million cubes, he had left ten million of them back in the Three Realms! The Three Realms would need that money for its development. As for the money he had gained from Patriarch Clearwind, that was reserved for the creation of his avatar. The total amount of chaos nectar and chaos jewels Ji Ning had totaled roughly thirty million cubes or so... and he had already promised up to five million for Su Youji and Pillsaint for them to purchase what they needed. Thus, Ning was lacking quite a bit; he'd have to throw in his darkspace flimestone ore.

"Darkspace flimestone ore? Of course Plumesoar Hall would be willing to purchase it. Follow me. A different Daolord is designated as the purchaser for special items and valuable treasures," the silver-robed Daolord.

"Alright." Ning followed behind the silver-robed Daolord and began to move deeper into Plumesoar Hall. They travelled through a wide passageway, and a short while later a thin, gray-robed man emerged from another part of the passageway. He glanced sideways at the two of them, then walked past them.

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When the gray-robed man exited Plumesoar Hall, a hint of avarice appeared in his eyes. "That Daolord of the Second Step was actually being invited into the important parts of Plumesoar Hall?" The gray-robed man pondered to himself, "That place is used for selling valuable treasures that are worth more than ten million cubes." He had been to Plumesoar Hall on multiple occasions, and so he was quickly able to deduce what was happening.

"I never would've imagined that a puny little Daolord of the Second Step would have more than ten million cubes worth of treasure." The skinny gray-robed man narrowed his eyes, both greed and violence filling his thoughts. "I've followed Master for countless years and gone into many

dangerous locations, but I only have a few million cubes worth of treasure. If I can kill him, all of his treasures will be mine.”

“But the problem is... if he has that much treasure, he definitely must have experienced extraordinary events. Should I attack him or not?” The gray-robed man pondered for a while, then made up his mind. “The path of cultivation is a dangerous path by nature. I am a Daolord of the Third Step, while he’s merely a Daolord of the Second Step. How strong could he possibly be? I’ll attack him. If I win, his treasures will be mine. If I lose, I should still be able to escape.”

After having pondered for a while, the gray-robed man decided to give it a try. As he saw it, even if this Daolord of the Second Step was a freakishly talented genius, he should be able to retreat unscathed. The gray-robed man immediately flew towards a nearby cloud-shrouded palace, preparing to keep watch from there. He didn’t plan on asking anyone else for assistance. Asking someone weaker to help out was pointless, while someone stronger than him would probably demand the lion’s share of the loot. He certainly didn’t wish to let that happen.

This was the nature of cultivation. Some cultivators focused on the Dao, tempering themselves through dangerous experiences. Others, however, preferred to plunder the possessions of their fellows. This was the fastest way of accumulating treasures, after all! But this path was a very dangerous path, because you never knew what secret killing techniques or trump cards your target might be holding. There are tradeoffs in all things. Plundering offered great rewards, and so there were still many Daolords willing to engage in such activities. A single successful kill might result in astonishing rewards, after all.

There were a few who were able to keep true to their own hearts and not engage in murder or robbery, with Ning being one of them. If other Daolords didn’t cause him problems, he wouldn’t antagonize them either.

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Ning had no idea that he had just become a target. He was happily selling off his stockpile of darkspace flimestone for the princely sum of

9.2 million cubes of chaos nectar, and he then purchased a number of things for Pillsaint and Su Youji.

"Now that I have this 'Heartspiral', I am much stronger than I was before." Su Youji happily held the white shell-shaped treasure in her hands, then looked at Ning. "Thank you, Master."

"Whee hee hee!" Pillsaint was celebrating his new treasures as well. As for Ning, he felt both happy and resigned. The Heartspiral was extremely powerful, and it was a perfect fit someone who walked the path of charm like Su Youji. However, it had cost him 5.8 million cubes of chaos nectar! Su Youji had lingered over the Heartspiral for quite some time, wanting to buy it but knowing that it cost more than the five million cube limit. In the end, after Ning had finished buying the materials he needed for his nine novessence arts, he saw her staring at the Heartspiral and agreed to buy it for her. As for Pillsaint, he had purchased a good furnace and various alchemical materials, which cost a total of around two million cubes.

"Ugh. I only have a few hundred thousand left." Ning couldn't help but sigh to himself. It really did seem as though he never had enough money on him.

For example, he really wanted to study the full copy of Emperor Heartsword's [Heartsword] technique, but it was far too expensive. The cost of that technique was many times higher than the nine novessence arts; there was no way he could afford it. In addition, Ning had already acquired the first ten stances of the [Heartsword] stance long ago. The truly valuable aspect of [Heartsword] lay in teaching its wielders the mysteries of how to truly merge one's heartforce with one's sword-arts. The first ten stances would already be plenty for Ning to research, especially given that Ning still wasn't a full Heartforce Cultivator yet. There was no rush.

In the future, as he continued to grow more powerful in his path of cultivation, he would definitely need to perfectly merge his heartforce techniques with his Dao of the Sword. Only then would he grow more powerful. Sooner or later, he would have to acquire the full [Heartsword] manual.

"Time to leave," Ning said with a smile.

"Right." Su Youji held the Heartspiral in her hands very happily.

"Where are we going, Master?" Pillsaint asked.

"First, let's go rent out an estate within the Skywood Sect," Ning said. Skywood City had more than a hundred thousand estates for rent that were made available to local cultivators; all one needed to do was spent a bit of chaos nectar for them. This really didn't amount to much; the several hundred thousand cubes of chaos nectar which Ning had on hand was enough for him to stay here for more than ten chaos cycles. All Ning really wanted to do was to just reside within the estates, giving him a safe place to master all nine novessence arts.

He now had his techniques and his treasures. It was time to master the nine novessence arts!

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"He came out." The skinny, gray-robed man was staring intently at Plumesoar Hall from his distant palace perch.

Ning's group of three had just flown out of Plumesoar Hall, smiles on their faces. They were chatting as they flew through the clouds. Ning was in an excellent mood, because he had come here precisely for the sake of those nine novessence arts! Although he had all but depleted his store of chaos nectar, he had done everything he wanted to do.

"Eh?" Ning suddenly frowned. A thin, gray-robed Daolord was flying straight towards him. It was normal to encounter Daolords in Skywood City, a Sacred City of the Dao Alliance, but what caused Ning to go on his guard was the fact that this Daolord was the one he had encountered earlier in Plumesoar Palace.

Although he was immediately put on high alert, on the surface he continued to smile as he lead Su Youji and Pillsaint forwards.

BOOM!

A black mist suddenly spread outwards, so thick that one couldn't see

through it with the naked eye. It instantly covered an area of tens of thousands of kilometers around them, and as it did an invisible surge of power swept across Ning. As for Ning, as soon as he saw the black mist coming he immediately drew Su Youji and Pillsaint into his estate-treasure.

The surge of invisible power struck directly at Ning's soul. If Ning really was just an ordinary Daolord of the Second Step, he would've fallen prey to this trick... but unfortunately, the gray-robed Daolord's opponent was Ji Ning.

"A soul-shaking technique? It doesn't even match up to Youji's." Although Ning didn't really worry about the attack too much, he was still prepared to unleash his full power in his counter. When a lion hunted a rabbit, it would still strike with full force!

"DIE!" The gray-robed man manifested a total of six arms, each wielding a curved scimitar. The light of his scimitars howled through the air as he chopped towards Ning with them. The area around Ning began to crack and shatter as saber-light appeared everywhere.

"First a secret art to shake my heart, then close combat to ensure my death. What a nasty fellow." Ning waved his right hand, causing a Northbow sword to appear.

"Break." Ning stabbed out with his sword. His strike seemed ordinary in every respect. And yet, although the gray-robed man had clearly been the first to strike, Ning's sword had stabbed through his forehead before his saber-light had even gotten close to Ning.

Fast. Indescribably fast. This was the Blood Drop stance of Ning's Omega Sword Dao! Of Ning's five Supreme Daos, the only one which had made further breakthroughs thus far was his Blood Drop sword-intent, and so his Blood Drop stance of his Omega Sword Dao was currently his most powerful strike. He was now a bit more powerful than he had been when he fought Patriarch Clearwind, and the power of this strike was close to Patriarch Clearwind's killer attack.

"H-how can..." A look of horror and shock appeared in the gray-robed

man's eyes. How could it be that his six scimitars weren't even able to touch or block this person's sword? How could his opponent be this fast?

Bang! The Blood Drop stance's full, penetrating power stabbed deep into the gray-robed man's body, instantly reducing it into dust. The man died on the spot! It must be remembered that Patriarch Clearwind's killer attack was able to kill weaker Daolords of the Fourth Step. This attack of Ning's wasn't much weaker!

"I never would've imagined that I'd be attacked as soon as I left Plumesoar Hall." Ning waved his hand, collecting the treasures which the gray-robed man had left behind. "Not even cultivators are immune to the allure of treasures..."

BOOM!!!

Suddenly, a surge of terrifying black mist shot out of one of the hundred thousand-plus estates off in the distance. Ning turned to look, only to see a pair of eyes emerge from the mist and stare towards him with a murderous look.

"Seal!" An invisible ripple of power spread out from afar. Although this attack came from a great distance, the region which Ning was in was almost instantly locked.

Ning's subconscious immediately began warning him that a terrifying threat was approaching, and the level of the threat was every bit the equal of the one posed by the Eternal Emperors Ning had encountered in the Azureflower Estate. Ning's heart began to tremble. He knew that the situation was dire, and could vaguely sense that the Daolord of the Third Step he had just slain had to have had some sort of connection to a truly major power.

"What the hell is going on?!" Ning had been in a wonderful mood just a few moments ago, but now his face immediately turned pale.

"Hide!" Ning was out of options. He immediately transformed into a streak of light, moving ten times faster than the limits of the Heavenly Daos as he charged right back into the nearby Plumesoar Hall.

Chapter 33: Daolord Kongsan

Plumesoar Hall was very close, and so Ji Ning was able to almost instantly fly back inside it. Per the rules of the Dao Alliance, it was absolutely forbidden to engage in acts of violence inside the restrictive spells protecting the various palaces and estates within the eight Sacred Cities. Anyone who violated this rule would be slain and their Dao destroyed!

“This fellow is pretty strong, but he probably wouldn’t dare to violate the rules of the entire Dao Alliance.” Ning relaxed slightly after hiding himself within the Plumesoar Hall. Even figures like Palace Lord Dawnstar or historical legends like Daolord Allgod hadn’t dared to challenge the Dao Alliance! The Dao Alliance’s roots were immeasurably deep, and it was the greatest organization of the entire Endless Territories. Challenge the Dao Alliance? The three Hegemons might have the power to do so, but even they wouldn’t actually carry it out.

“What an enormous disturbance.”

“What is going on?”

The customers and servants inside Plumesoar Hall all stared outside. Although the battle between Ning and the gray-robed man had concluded quite quickly, it had caused quite a disturbance as well. As for Ning, he had no time to waste on the gazes of others; his attention was focused on what was happening outside.

Whoosh. Far away, a ball of black mist suddenly appeared at the margins of the frozen space. Moments later, that black mist solidified into a human figure.

This was a man dressed in long, beautiful black robes. He had fiery red hair and fiery red eyes that were filled with an evil, murderous intent. He was currently staring at Ning, hidden away within Plumesoar Hall. Ning was staring right back at this man. Their gazes collided in midair!

“Quite bold. No wonder you dared to kill the disciple of myself, Kongsan.” Daolord Kongsan stood there calmly in empty space, emanating

an aura of transcendant dominance. This was an aura that came from overwhelming self-confidence, which was in turn born from a person having reached an extremely high level cultivation that allowed him to roam the Endless Territories without meeting any superiors.

“Kongsan?” When Ning heard this name, his heart turned cold. His star map had some records regarding some of the more famous Daolords of the Endless Territories. Although the records he had on Kongsan weren’t very detailed, he still had a rough idea as to how strong this person was.

“Daolord Kongsan.” Ning remained within the protective embrace of the Plumesoar Hall’s barriers as he said in a loud voice, “I imagine, given your power, you know what happened just now. Your disciple suddenly ambushed me with the intention of killing me. I didn’t cause any trouble for him! Since he struck to kill, I cannot be blamed for killing him instead. I only struck out with a single sword.”

“He ambushed you and wanted to kill you. He failed and you killed him instead. This is all very normal.” The distant Daolord Kongsan stared at Ning calmly, but Ning couldn’t help but feel a cold feeling in his heart. “He was still, however, my disciple. Since you killed my disciple, I am going to kill you. If you have the necessary patience, you should stay in Plumesoar Hall for the rest of your life. As soon as you leave it, I’ll kill you.”

His voice was very calm, but the murderous intent within it was quite clear and heavy. There was nothing to negotiate.

“Hmph.” Ning narrowed his eyes, then turned and left.

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The cultivators and servants within Plumesoar Hall all watched curiously as they listened to Ning and Daolord Kongsan’s conversation.

“This white-robed Daolord is screwed. He actually pissed off Daolord Kongsan! Given Daolord Kongsan’s temper, he’s going to kill this kid no matter what.”

“Poor bastard.”

“Did he really think he could get away with killing Kongsan’s disciple?”

“But the white-robed Daolord is also quite formidable. He’s clearly just a Daolord of the Second Step, but he was able to kill Daolord Kongsan’s disciple with ease. That disciple had visited Plumesoar Hall on many occasions, often serving as his master’s errand boy. He was still, however, a Daolord of the Third Step. I never would’ve thought that he’d be killed in the blink of an eye. He didn’t even have the chance to beg his master to come save him.”

These cultivators and servants all chatted amongst themselves, with the servants of Plumesoar Hall being especially casual in their words. They might be weak, but they belonged to the Skywood Sect. There was an ironclad rule in Skywood City – disciples of the Skywood Sect were not to be touched! Not even Eternal Emperors would dare to violate this rule within the confines of Skywood City. This type of rule was a joint one shared throughout the eight Sacred Cities.

Whoosh. Ning entered the hall once more. The cultivators and servants turned their gazes towards Ning, and they naturally stopped chattering about him. Ning had a solemn look on his face, and his forehead was furrowed as he frowned. Clearly, he was quite troubled.

To have been targeted by Daolord Kongsan was indeed quite troublesome. Still, Ning wasn’t really afraid of him. The deceased Hegemon had given him two Dao-seals, after all, which contained the power of a full-force strike from the Hegemon. If push came to shove, he would just use one of them up! However, Ning knew exactly how valuable those two Dao-seals were. They were priceless treasures! The Sword Hegemon had only been willing to pay the price necessary to make them once he realized that he was definitely going to die. These two Dao-seals would be protective, life-saving talismans for Ning for a long time to come. Ning wouldn’t use them unless he truly had to.

“Senior.” The female attendant who had received Ning earlier walked over to him once more.

“Right. I heard that in a month from now, Plumesoar Hall will be holding

a treasure auction?" Ning suddenly asked with a laugh. The nearby guests and attendants were all secretly amazed. This Daolord of the Second Step was still able to laugh at a time like this?

The female attendant immediately replied, "Yes, senior. A month from now, Plumesoar Cloud will indeed hold a treasure auction. Quite a few treasures will be up for sale this time, and the reserve prices will be much lower than in the outside world. You might find something which is both cheap and useful." The low reserve prices of the treasure auctions was a main reason why they were so attractive to cultivators.

"I'm being targeted by Daolord Kongsan, so I can't leave for now. I have nothing better to do, so I figured I'd go check this treasure auction of yours out," Ning laughed. "Give me a private room. I'll wait a month for that treasure auction to begin."

"Done." The female attendant nodded repeatedly. "Please follow me."

There were some very cheap seats for each treasure auction, but there were also private, secluded rooms. If you wished to purchase some extremely valuable treasures while keeping your identity private, you would generally use one of those private rooms. No one would disturb you so long as you remained inside – this was one of the rules which Plumesoar Hall had established long ago.

The attendants and guests once more began to speculate as they watched Ning leave with the female attendant.

"The white-robed Daolord looks pretty calm."

"Agreed. He knows that Daolord Kongsan is outside waiting for him, but he's still able to relax and take part in the treasure auction."

"In my opinion, he's probably going to stay inside this hall for a very long period of time.

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Ning couldn't be bothered to respond to the gossip going on around him. Soon, he and the attendant both reached a private room. Dalords lived for extremely long periods of time; for them to arrive a few months

early for a treasure auction was quite commonplace.

“Senior, while you are in this private room, no one will disturb you unless you summon them first. Not even the members of Plumesoar Hall itself will disturb you, to say nothing of Daolord Kongsan,” the female attendant said.

“I have faith in the Skywood Sect.” Ning nodded. “Now, there’s something I need you to do for me.”

“Please tell me what you need, senior” the female attendant said.

Ning nodded slowly. “I need an intelligence report regarding Daolord Kongsan’s abilities, the more detailed the better. It needs information on all his techniques and secret arts, as well as information on his previous opponents. I need as much information as your Skywood Sect can provide.”

The female attendant couldn’t help but feel shocked, but she nodded. “As detailed as possible? The price will be quite high. It’ll probably cost around a hundred thousand cubes of chaos nectar.”

“A hundred thousand is fine.” Ning nodded. The more powerful a cultivator was, the more expensive intelligence reports about them would be. The Brightshore Kingdom’s star map held information on virtually all the Daolords of the Endless Territories, but that information was fairly cursory in nature. To procure much more detailed individual intelligence reports was extremely difficult.

“Give me a moment,” the female attendant said respectfully, then retreated.

Within the private room. Ning was originally there by himself, but moments later Pillsaint and Su Youji appeared by his side.

“Master, what happened?” Su Youji immediately asked.

“Why did you put the two of us into the estate-world?” Pillsaint was puzzled as well.

“We encountered a bit of trouble.” Ning narrated what had just

happened to them. Su Youji and Pillsaint's faces instantly turned pale.

Su Youji said worriedly, "From what you are saying, it sounds as though this Daolord Kongsan is extremely powerful. What should we do?"

"Haha, no need to worry too much. We have all the food and drink we want here. Why worry about him?" Ning picked up a nearby canteen of wine and poured himself a cup, then began to sip it in a relaxed manner as he glanced sideways at Pillsaint and Su Youji. "Don't just stand there like idiots. Sit down and have a cup with me."

Su Youji and Pillsaint were both feeling rather nervous, but they still sat down. After a short period of time drinking together, the sound of the door being knocked rang out. "Come in," Ning said.

The female attendant was outside. She handed a jde slip to Ning, then said respectfully, "Senior, all the information we have regarding Daolord Kongsan is here." Skywood Sect not only engaged in the treasure trade, it also engaged in the intelligence trade.

"Mm." Ning put down his wine cup, then picked up the jade slip and began to read it carefully. As he read through the information, he tossed a storage treasure to the outsider woman. "You can leave now."

The attendant looked through the storage treasure, then left obediently. "If there's anything that you need, just summon me whenever you wish, senior."

Ning nodded, and she shut the door behind her.

"Kongsan." Ning picked up the jade slip once more, studying all of the information regarding Daolord Kongsan which was within that jade slip.

Chapter 34: Secret Arts Mastered

Ji Ning began to frown as he stared at the jade slip. What a formidable figure. He was so strong that he was most likely ranked amongst the second tier of Verge-level Daolords.

Based on what Ning knew, the first-tier Verge-level Daolords included the likes of Palace Lord Dawnstar, Daolord Allgod, and other similar figures. Palace Lord Dawnstar had once slain an Eternal Emperor with three chops of his saber, while Daolord Allgod had sent Emperor Melobo fleeing in terror.

It must be remembered that Emperor Melobo was not only an Eternal Emperor, he was also an Awakened member of the Aeonian race who was still alive today. Ordinary Eternal Emperors simply couldn't compare to him in power... and yet, in the face of Daolord Allgod, he was only able to flee. In a true duel, Daolord Allgod was a bit inferior to Palace Lord Dawnstar in ferocity of attacks, but he was actually superior in tenacity and endurance. The Dao of the Sword and the Dao of the Saber were offensive Daos, after all!

"Daolord Kongsan is a bit weaker than Palace Lord Dawnstar, but not even Palace Lord Dawnstar would be able to slay him." Ning frowned. "He's skilled in the Dao of Darkness and can transform into darkness itself. He's virtually unkillable. His ability to transform into darkness means that he has incredible control over space! When fleeing, he's able to move at thirty-six times the speed of light. The darkness, by nature, is inscrutable and mysterious. This Dao can be used to affect the soul, but it's particularly dangerous in close combat."

"He's an untamable, unruly figure with no clan and no sects. He is also an extremely selfish person, and at least sixteen Daolords of the Fourth Step have died to him. He's currently living in an estate within Skywood City." The more Ning read, the bigger his headache became.

Daolords who were skilled in combat weren't terrifying. Daolords who were skilled in staying alive were! Kongsan was one such person. His

ability to dissolve into darkness made him virtually unkillable, and he was incredibly fast and skilled in spatial teleportation. He could flee whenever he wished, but was also dangerous in close combat. He had no obvious weaknesses!

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“Master?” Su Youji called out softly.

“Master, is Kongsan a tough nut to crack?” Pillsaint asked.

Ning put away the jade slip, then nodded. “A very tough nut indeed. He’s one of the toughest Daolords to deal with. Not even Palace Lord Dawnstar would be able to kill him.”

“He’s that powerful?” Both Su Youji and Pillsaint were shocked. Palace Lord Dawnstar was the most powerful Daolord of the Brightshore Kingdom.

“No, he’s just very skilled in staying alive. His attacks are nowhere near Palace Lord Dawnstar’s level.” Ning had already come to a decision on what to do. “Pillsaint, Youji, I need to train for a while. Help stand guard over me, and don’t let anyone in Plumesoar Hall disturb me.”

“Understood,” Pillsaint and Su Youji both said in unison. Ning then waved his hand, causing a stooped, thatched cottage to appear next to him.

Ning’s body flickered as he flew into the thatched cottage. This was actually a small temporal acceleration estate-world, and by using up a bit of Immortal energy Ning would be able to maintain a rate of a hundred times the normal flow of time.

Within the thatched cottage. Ning was seated here in the lotus position. With a wave of the hand, he caused a series of black gourds to appear. Each black gourd contained Dao lightning, Dao fire, and other similar materials that he needed to train in the nine novessence arts.

Pop! Pop! The stoppers popped out of two of the gourds. Instantly, two streaks of Dao lightning flew out towards Ning. One was a streak of gray lightning that was filled with endless destructive power, while the other

was a streak of white lightning that seemed to emanate an endless aura of hope. These two streaks of Dao lightning instantly surged into Ning's body and were easily absorbed into their respective lightning bases.

"I now have all nine lightning bases I need. Time to give it a try. If my prediction is correct, I should stand a good chance of mastering the full novessence thunder." Ning immediately began to try it out.

Crack! Bang! Boom!

It was a scene of utter chaos.

Bang! Boom! Crack!

Explosions rang out unabated.

However, Ning was able to remain very calm. Everything was under his control. The alchemical techniques he had learned from the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] were extremely profound! Lightning was by nature an unruly type of energy, and he was dealing with nine different types of it! The hardest part was perfectly joining the octessence thunder together with the Felworld lightning. The octessence lightning was already incredibly hard to control and was capable of easily wiping out Daolords of the Third Step. As for the Felworld lightning, it was easily the most berserk of the nine types of Dao lightning.

You couldn't force things when trying to control them; you had to find and follow the flow, then slowly nudge them together, making it so that although they seemed to remain as wild and unruly as ever, they were acting in accordance with the will of an incredibly sly hunter and were drawn into one 'trap' after another. Ning spent a full two months guiding and nudging the octessence thunder and the Felworld lightning, and during this period of time he could not slack off in the slightest.

"BOOM!!!" In the end, a sudden explosion blasted out as the novessence thunder was formed! This was a streak of beautiful black lightning, and its black surface was covered with tiny silk strands that were like a layer of fur. The novessence thunder was like a living creature, like a dragon that happily swam through Ning's Jindan chaos region with ease.

Ning let out a sigh of relief. He opened his eyes, then stretched out his right hand. Whoosh! A stream of soft black divine lightning appeared within the palm of his hands. It looked like a streak of gentle and reserved black lightning, but it actually held an incomprehensible amount of power inside.

“This streak of lightning is able to slay Daolords of the Fourth Step by itself?” Ning couldn’t help but sigh. Daolords of the Fourth Step generally possessed incredible divine bodies and were garbed in Dao armor, but the novessence thunder was capable of slaying them! Of course, it could only slay ‘ordinary’ Daolords of the Fourth Step, but that did not detract from how terrifying it was.

“The novessence water is easier to master than the novessence thunder. Time to train in it.” Ning gave himself one day of rest, then continued in his training. This time, he focused on mastering the [Novessence Water] technique.”

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It had taken him two months to master the [Novessence Thunder], but only half a month to master the [Novessence Water]. He took over a month to master the [Novessence Fire], as Ning wasn’t nearly as talented in fire as he was in thunder and water. The [Novessence Earth] took more than two months, while the [Novessence Metal] took more than three months.

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Ning mastered one secret art after another, spending the most time on the [Novessence Light] technique, as he knew very little regarding the Dao of Light. This took him nearly two years before he was able to master it. The [Novessence Void], the most powerful and thus the (theoretically) most difficult of the novessence arts, Ning was actually able to master in just eight months.

“I’ve actually mastered all nine of the secret arts?” After finishing the [Novessence Void], Ning himself felt a bit amazed at what he had accomplished. He would’ve been satisfied if he had been able to master

the [Novessence Water], which was fairly weak and which he was quite familiar with. He never would've imagined that after a bit of effort, he would master all nine of the novessence arts!

Daolord Allgod had used these arts to roam the Endless Territories. They really were a killer combination! And he, Ji Ning, had actually mastered them?

"Thank goodness I had the azureflower mist energy, the Omega Sword Dao, and most importantly of all the [Seven Leafpill Chapters]." Ning quickly understood why he had been able to master this technique.

Daolord Allgod had originally claimed that one would have to first become a Daolord of the Fourth Step, then become extremely skilled in alchemy, lightning, light, water, etc. before one would be able to master this technique! As for Ji Ning?

He had the azureflower mist energy, making him comparable to a Daolord of the Fourth Step in terms of Immortal energy. As far as alchemical techniques went, Ning had spent millions of years by the side of the Paragon of Pills. He hadn't advanced too much in sword-arts during that period of time, and almost all of his spare time had been spent on the [Seven Leafpill Chapters] and the alchemical techniques included within its most profound seventh chapter. His alchemical technique was superior to even Daolord Allgod's.

As for the Dao...

He wasn't exactly skilled in the Dao of Metal, the Dao of Wind, the Dao of Wood, and many of the other Daos. However, the fifth stance of the [Brightmoon] sword-art, the Shadowless sword-intent, required him to be able to merge himself into all of his surroundings. Thus, when he had been in the inner reaches of the Genesis Lands of the alternate universe, Ning had personally visited all of the corpses of the many deceased Eternal Emperors and had meditated on the auras of their Daos.

He was very familiar with the auras of all types of Daos, and he had learned how to merge himself into them. This was part of the reason why his Shadowless sword-intent allowed him to merge into all things. Thus,

although Ning wasn't skilled in the Dao of Metal or the Dao of Wood, he was at least familiar with them. This familiarity with them, their strengths, their weaknesses... it was all a prerequisite for Ning to be able to merge into them and disappear within them.

This was exactly what the nine novessence arts required, for the user to be very familiar with the various elemental properties. One had to follow their flow and go with the grain in mixing them together like alchemical ingredients in a pill.

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On this day, within a nondescript private room inside the Plumesoar Hall of Skywood City, one of the eight Sacred Cities of the Dao Alliance, Ji Ning silently and soundlessly mastered all nine of the novessence arts, arts which would cause countless Daolords to blaunch with fear!

"This was rather unexpected. Still... since I've mastered all nine of the secret arts..." Ning pondered for a moment. "I might not need to waste the Hegemon's Dao-seal after all."

"Right now, those nine mighty novessence arts are my greatest trump card. I need to find a way to make them unleash the maximum amount of power possible," Ning pondered. The Hegemon's two Dao-seal were trump cards that could only be used one time each, while the nine novessence arts were his own arts that could be used as many times as he chose. He naturally had to enhance them as much as he could. If he just used them for their raw power, they would still be quite strong, yes, but this wasn't their full potential. If he could use those nine novessence arts as nine swords and then use his Omega Sword Dao's Yin-Yang Sword Domain, the power of the novessence arts would be vastly greater.

"My Omgea Sword Dao's Blood Drop sword-intent has made a breakthrough, but the Yin-Yang sword-intent has not. I hope I will be to make some breakthroughs soon. That way, my nine novessence arts will be able to unleash even greater power. Daolord Allgod was a grandmaster in the art of formations, which was why he was able to use those nine secret arts to form a terrifying formation to attack his foes. This was what

allowed him to crush Emperor Melobo.”

Clearly, Ning wished to upgrade the power of his nine novessence arts as best he could.

“However, I’ve just finished mastering these nine arts. I need to rest a bit first.” Whoosh. Ning’s body flickered and emerged from the thatched cottage. He waved his hand, putting it away.

“Master.” “Master.” Pillsaint and Su Youji were seated outside the private room, and they immediately turned to stare towards Ning.

“What is it?” Ning laughed.

“The treasure auction has already begun. It’s gone on for several days,” Pillsaint said, then added worriedly, “Master, how do you plan to deal with Daolord Kongsan?”

“No need to worry.” Ning walked out of the private room, then stared downwards through a window. At this very moment, a loud and exciting treasure auction was occurring below them.

Ning sat down relaxedly, then picked up a nearby cup of wine. He sipped at it as he watched the treasure auction.

Chapter 35: An Exchange of Goods

The treasure auction was in progress. In order to attract more Daolords, each treasure auction would have a few incredibly rare and valuable items that normally would never be sold and would only be traded for similarly valuable items. During the treasure auctions, however, they could be purchased for chaos nectar. Only, the price would be incredibly high.

“Haha...” Ning couldn’t help but laugh as he watched. “In the end, there’s a limit to how useful magic treasures can be.” There were some unearthly treasures which would allow a Daolord of the First Step to contend against a Daolord of the Fourth Step, but treasures could only help up to a certain point. Treasures that could unleash the power of a Daolord of the Fourth Step were generally worth more than ten million cubes of chaos nectar, and as their power increased their cost would skyrocket.

Ning noticed one insanely powerful and insanely expensive treasure known as the ‘Kingdom Blade’. This was a formation, and anyone who had this formation could spread it across a hundred million kilometers with a single thought. Within the formation, countless streaks of saber-light would appear, and these attacks were so powerful that ordinary Daolords of the Fourth Step would be instantly slain by them. Even Daolords who weren’t killed would still be heavily constrained! Ning estimated that this formation was definitely on par with his own novessence thunder attack.

The bidding for this formation started at the reserve price of eighty million cubes of chaos nectar, and in the end it was sold for 120 million cubes.

“Treasures like this are all external sources of strength.” The nearby Pillsaint nodded sagely. “Artificing and alchemy all have their limits as well. Earlier, I saw a treasure in Plumesoar Hall which could unleash the power of an Eternal Emperor, but treasures like that would never appear in a treasure auction. Without question, they can only be traded for.”

Ning nodded. Treasures could generally be used multiple times, whereas

Dao-seals would be consumed after a single use as all they did was unleash the power which had originally been sealed into them. As a result, Dao-seals were much easier to make than magic treasures. The Sword Hegemon's Dao-seals and the almighty Brightshore Hegemon's spacetime disc were all single-use items.

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A few days later, yet another incredible treasure appeared within this treasure auction. Generally speaking, each treasure auction would have ten or so treasures like this.

"Fellow Daoists." The ancient elder standing before the dais called out in a loud voice, "This treasure is an important item which was personally forged by Emperor Milcloth."

The many Daolords seated below were all stirred. Even Ning's eyes lit up as he stared downwards from his private room. Emperor Milcloth was one of the top three artificers of the entire Endless Territories.

Whoosh. A palm-sized black flying vessel suddenly appeared in the air above the elder's hands. Although the flying vessel was small, it naturally emanated an aura of such terrifying keenness that anyone who saw it knew it had to be incredibly fast.

"This is a flying vessel which is perfectly suited for soaring at high speeds. The Emperor forged it just a short while ago, and has yet to even choose a name for it. The person who purchases it shall have the right to name it." The elder smiled, but the Daolords didn't really care about this. What a treasure's name was didn't matter; what really mattered was the amount of power it could unleash.

"This magic treasure can move a hundred times the speed of light," the elder said softly, but his quiet words drove the many Daolords below him into a state of frenzy. "The reserve price is 60 million cubes."

"60 million cubes." A deep voice instantly rang out from one of the private rooms up above.

"65 million cubes." One of the Daolords seated in the corner of the main

hall below, a golden-robed man, calmly made his offer.

“68 million cubes.”

This was one of the eight Sacred Cities, after all. It had many Daolords within it. Evasion-type treasures were extremely valuable to begin with, with vessels that could move at ten times the speed of light generally costing more than ten million cubes. Ones which could move at a hundred times the speed of light could generally only be traded for.

Although there were technically a number of master artificers in the Endless Territories who were capable of creating evasion-type treasures that could move at a hundred times the speed of light, the actual creation process was extremely difficult. Powerful Daolords were extremely interested in treasures like this, as there were very few who could move at a hundred times the speed of light. In fact, there weren’t even many Eternal Emperors who could move at that speed.

“Eh?” Ning suddenly rose to his feet within his private room.

“Master?” Pillsaint and Youji both looked towards Ning, but Ning walked towards the window, then pushed it open. Outside was that female attendant, who had been awaiting his summons this entire time.

“Senior.” Although she had been waiting here for months, she immediately addressed him with respect.

“I wish to use a treasure to trade for that flying vessel which is currently being auctioned off,” Ning said.

The female attendant was startled. That was one of the top ten treasures of this treasure auction! She immediately said, “I’ve already sent your request forwards. A Daolord will arrive shortly.”

Whoosh. Just as she finished saying this, a figure suddenly materialized directly in front of Ning. It was the silver-robed Daolord who Ning had interacted with just a few months ago.

“Fellow Daoist, you truly do business on a grand scale.” The silver-robed Daolord smiled, quite amazed by the white-robed youth in front of him. The man looked like a Daolord of the Second Step, but he was able to kill

Daolords of the Third Step as easily as crushing an ant. He had already brought forty million cubes worth of business to Plumesoar Hall. Now, he was planning to acquire that flying vessel?

“Come inside and chat,” Ning said.

“Wait outside,” the silver-robed Daolord instructed the female attendant, then followed Ning into the private room and shut the door.

Within the private room. The silver-robed Daolord walked to the windows as well. He glanced downwards, then said merrily, “That flying vessel can move at a hundred times the limits of the Heavenly Daos. That’s the maximum speed any flying vessel can obtain, and they are generally only exchanged for goods of similar value, never sold. When they do appear during our treasure auctions... the price has already reached seventy million cubes, but I wager it’ll at least hit ninety million cubes. Plumesoar Hall will never engage in a losing business transaction, no matter what.”

Ning nodded. He also felt certain that the final price would be at least ninety million cubes. “I know that Plumesoar Hall has more than a single flying vessel that can move that fast,” Ning said. “I wish to trade for one.”

“Trade?” The silver-robed Daolord’s eyes lit up. He delighted in engaging in this type of trade. Flying vessels of this quality were generally only traded for similarly valuable treasures, as only the most valuable of items could possess such amazing properties.

“Ordinary treasures won’t cut it,” the silver-robed Daolord reminded softly.

“Take a look for yourself,” Ning said, then waved his hand, causing a golden pearl with a flowing surface to appear within it.

“Deluxe hellgold?” The silver-robed Daolord’s eyes lit up. This was a core for creating a golem equivalent to a Daolord of the Fourth Step. Items like this could only be hoped for, not hunted down. “But a single pearl won’t be enough.” The silver-robed Daolord shook his head.

Ning waved his hand again. This time, a small, light green jade bottle

appeared within it. A single blood-red fruit that looked like an actual drop of blood flew out from the jade bottle and hung there in the air.

"I-is that..." The silver-robed Daolord's face began to turn pale as he stared at the item. A sacred bloodfruit? A skyjewel bloodfruit? This thing was even rarer than the deluxe hellgold, because sacred bloodfruit trees were generally controlled by the ancient, truly supreme powers of the Endless Territories. Even Hegemons would fight over such trees! Thus, the sacred bloodfruit which came from these trees would generally fall into the hands of Hegemon-level individuals. Although every single major organization was willing to spend roughly twenty million cubes to purchase a single sacred bloodfruit, those ancient powers who owned them cared little for chaos nectar and would generally only exchange them for other valuable treasures.

"These two treasures combined are still a bit lacking." The silver-robed Daolord looked closely at Ning.

"A pearl of deluxe hellgold and a skyjewel bloodfruit, if sold on the treasure auction, should have a reserve price of at least sixty million cubes of chaos nectar," Ning said. "Tell me, what do you think the final price would be?"

The silver-robed Daolord was startled by the question.

"Although flying vessels that can move at a hunndred times the speed of light are rare, there are a number that are available for sale," Ning said. "If you aren't happy with my offer, I'll go take it somewhere else."

"Y-you are seriously such a..." The silver-robed Daolord laughed helplessly. The deluxe hellgold and the skyjewel bloodfruit were indeed quite intriguing, but a flying vessel that could move at a hundred times the speed of light was also extremely valuable. The two really were worth roughly the same.

"Fine. Plumesoar Hall is willing to enter this deal with you." The silver-robed Daolord nodded, then glanced downwards. By now, the bidding war had already reached a price of 90 million cubes, but the bids were clearly slowing down.

“95 million cubes,” the silver-robed Daolord called out.

“95.5 million cubes,” a different Daolord gritted his teeth and called out.

“98 million cubes.” The silver-robed Daolord wasn’t interested in wasting time; he immediately raised the price once more.

Ning, Su Youji, and Pillsaint were all a bit surprised. The silver-robed Daolord glanced at the three of them, then chuckled. “Making bids on our own treasures is actually quite common. If the real bids on the best treasures aren’t high enough, we’ll just ‘buy’ some of them ourselves.”

Ning and the others couldn’t help but let out startled laughs. It seemed as though Plumesoar Hall really did refuse to lose money on any of these treasure trades.

In truth, to the massively powerful organizations within the Dao Alliance like the Skywood Sect, chaos nectar wasn’t really all that valuable. Deluxe hellgold, sacred bloodfruit, and other similarly rare cosmic treasures were much more worthy of collection. Deluxe hellgold wasn’t that alluring; it was the skyjewel bloodfruit which caused this silver-robed Daolord to agree to this trade, because the Skywood Sect just so happened to need it to go with a number of other valuable ingredients for pill-refining.

In the end, the flying vessel was ‘won’ at the price of 98 million cubes. The deluxe hellgold and the skyjewel bloodfruit was given to the silver-robed Daolord, while the flying vessel entered Ning’s hands.

“If you have other rare items, feel free to bring them to Plumesoar Hall.” The silver-robed Daolord smiled. “We have many precious treasures, including even Dao-seals which mighty Eternal Emperors poured all of their effort into. Those can all be traded for.”

“Not a bad idea.” Ning smiled, then picked up the flying vessel and nodded mentally to himself. Just using the nine novessence arts against Daolord Kongsan probably wouldn’t be enough, as the man was capable of transforming his body into darkness and making it virtually indestructible. But now that Ning had this flying vessel, he would definitely be guaranteed of being able to escape whenever he chose.

Although the deluxe hellgold and the skyjewel bloodfruit were important, one was an artificing ingredient while the other was an alchemical ingredient. Ning neither understood artificing nor specialized in alchemy. Use skyjewel bloodfruit in alchemy? Not even Daolord Allgod would necessarily be qualified to engage in alchemy on such a level.

Chapter 36: Into Battle

Skywood City. The fiery-haired, fiery-eyed, black-robed Daolord Kongsan was seated in the lotus position within the protective formations of Plumesoar Hall, his eyes closed as he waited quietly. He had been waiting before the doors for more than two years already. So long as Ji Ning dared to emerge, he would immediately sense it.

“Is Daolord Kongsan going to just wait there?”

“What else can he do? That white-robed Daolord has been hiding inside Plumesoar Hall this entire time, refusing to come out. No matter how strong Daolord Kongsan is, he wouldn’t dare to challenge the Dao Alliance.” The attendants inside the hall were all gossiping amongst each other.

“If the white-robed Daolord stays inside Plumesoar Hall for an entire chaos cycle, will Daolord Kongsan wait here for an entire chaos cycle?”

“Hard to say! However, the white-robed Daolord seems to be just a Daolord of the Second Step. This is a critical period of time for him as a cultivator. There’s no way he’s going to just hide in there forever, right?”

“It might slow down his cultivation, but at least he’ll stay alive if he continues to hide in there! If he leaves, he’s dead.”

They all continuously whispered amongst each other about this. These attendants were all World-level figures, and they were quite interested in the grudges which elite Daolords held against each other. Whenever such elite Daolords battled against each other, news of it would quickly spread far and wide. The stories of how Daolord Allgod hunted Emperor Melobo were passed down for countless generations. Although the affair between Ning and Daolord Kongsan wouldn’t be talked about for nearly that long, it would still be the talk of the town for a brief period of time.

On one side was a monstrously strong Daolord, Daolord Kongsan. On the other side was a mere Daolord of the Second Step who was so talented he had easily slain a Daolord of the Third Step; his true power was most likely that of a Verge-level Daolord as well.

Both were at a high level of power, which naturally made for a good story.

“Eh?”

“Is that...”

“Am I seeing things?”

The attendants of Plumesoar Hall all stared in astonishment at the white-robed figure who had just emerged from the inner hallways, carrying a black sword scabbard on his back. That face... those clothes... that aura... it was the person they were talking about, the mysterious white-robed Daolord!

“He actually came out? He actually dared to come out?”

“Is he suicidal?”

“There’s no way he’s coming out to die. He has to have something up his sleeve.” These attendants all watched curiously, alongside a good number of guests. Most of the guests were Daolords, and a few were even Daolords of the Fourth Step. However, none of them dared to get involved in a matter like this. Daolord Kongsan had been waiting here for more than two years already! This alone testified as to how badly he wished to kill the white-robed Daolord.

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Ning glanced at the attendants and Daolords, chuckled, then flew towards the entrance of Plumesoar Hall. As soon as he stepped outside, he saw the black-robed Daolord Kongsan seated in the lotus position by the doorway.

“Daolord Kongsan, you certainly are quite a patient man,” Ning said.

Daolord Kongsan opened his eyes. The sharpness of his fiery eyes would cause ordinary Daolords to feel a sense of oppression in their hearts. He cracked his lips into a cold, strange smile. “I thought you would hide inside for a few chaos cycles, kid. I didn’t expect you to come out so soon.”

“If I stayed inside for several chaos cycles, would you really have waited

here the entire time?” Ning was surprised.

“I’m a very patient man,” Daolord Kongsan said calmly. “To me, time doesn’t really matter. When my life is about to end, I shall go and prepare for my Daomerge.”

“You sound as though you really have nothing interesting in your life.” Ning shook his head. Wait here for several chaos cycles? How long had Ning been cultivating for?! Daolord Kongsan might be patient enough to wait that long, but Ning himself definitely was not.

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The attendants and guests within Plumesoar Hall all watched curiously as the two figures outside chatted with each other. One was dressed in beautiful black robes, the other was dressed in white clothes. One had a dominating and rather evil aura, while the other looked unassuming and reserved but was clearly a freakishly talented Daolord who had simply hidden away his sharpness.

“The white-robed Daolord doesn’t look scared at all.”

“Their words are tit for tat against each other.”

The customers all listened quietly, and many of them couldn’t help but feel admiration for the weaker white-robed Daolord.

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“Nothing interesting in my life? You don’t understand. Waiting is a way to temper one’s Dao-heart, and as such is a form of cultivation.” Daolord Kongsan wasn’t the slightest bit irritated, and his eyes remained as cold as ice. “What, are you going to stay within the protective barriers this entire time?” Both of them were inside the barriers of Plumesoar Hall, and combat was forbidden here.

“I’m not as bored as you. I wouldn’t waste time coming out here just to tease you a bit.” Ning shook his head. “I’m going to be leaving now. Follow me if you can.” Swoosh. Ning transformed into a streak of light, instantly flying outside the protective barrier.

"Hmph." Daolord Kongsan's aura expanded dramatically as he instantly disappeared into a cloud of black mist which surge out of the barrier formation and swept towards Ning.

Ning, in midair, glanced backwards at the mist. The mist was a roiling mass of darkness that was rolling straight towards him. Just looking at the mist alone caused Ning to feel a powerful sense of danger.

"It isn't the right time to fight you just yet," Ning mused to himself. With a wave of his hand, Ning caused a black flying vessel to appear next to him. This vessel was shaped like the tip of a sword, and it emanated an aura of incredible keenness. Whoosh! Ning entered the vessel. "Let's go." Now that Ning was in control of the flying vessel, it suddenly exploded with speed and went from zero to a hundred times the speed of light.

"What?" A human face immediately appeared within the roiling black mist behind Ning, and it stared straight at the vessel. "He actually has a flying vessel that can move at a hundred times the speed of light?"

A hundred times faster than the limits of the Heavenly Daos. What did speed like this mean?

Even Dao lightning 'only' moved at this speed! This was a level of speed which Samsara Daolords generally were unable to aspire to. There were many freakishly talented Daolords who weren't even close to being this fast, even when they reached the Verge. Kongsan himself, for example, could only move at thirty-six times the speed of light! Palace Lord Dawnstar had reached incredible heights in the dao of the Saber, but if he merely relied on his Dao to travel even he would only be able to move at fifty times the speed of light.

Even those who were skilled in speed-oriented Daos such as the Dao of Lightning, the Dao of Wind, or the Dao of Light were rarely able to reach a hundred times the speed of light. To exceed that level of speed? You had to reach an absolutely unimaginable level of insight into a speed if you wished to do so.

For flying treasures, vessels like the one which Ning had purchased represented the apex of speed possible for treasures! Flying treasures

could at most move at a hundred times the speed of light. If you wanted to go faster than that, you'd have to focus on your own training and cultivation. The vast majority of Eternal Emperors weren't able to move that fast!

"A hundred times the speed of light?" Daolord Kongsan was truly stunned, but moments later his murderous intent began to boil once more. "Excellent. It seems this kid has many treasures on him, far more than most Daolords of the Fourth Step."

It must be remembered that Daolord Kongsan had sixteen verified kills of Daolords of the Fourth Step. He loved to kill others and seize their treasures. "No wonder he dared to come out. Unfortunately... he's still too young." Daolord Kongsan smirked. "Activate!"

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Ning was controlling his flying vessel to advance at high speed. He flew out of Skywood City in the blink of an eye, but suddenly...

"Activate." A cold voice echoed for countless kilometers around him. Rumble... the formation-bases which had been hidden throughout this area suddenly showed themselves, emanating pillars of light that towered to the heavens. An enormous amount of power began to gather, and this area quickly became a completely sealed region that was separated from the outside world.

"What?!" Ning's face paled.

"Ahahaha..." The black mist once more reformed into the black-robed Daolord Kongsan. He said with a cold laugh, "Kid, did you really think you were a match for me? I knew that you would only leave once you were fully prepared... but did you really think that you were the only one who could make preparations? I've already set up four rings of formations in the area outside of Skywood City. No matter which way you fled, you'd still end up inside one of them. Space has been completely locked within this formation; no matter how fast you are, you won't be able to escape. The only path still open to you... is the path to hell!"

Ning stood there within his flying vessel. He stared at the distant

Daolord Kongsan, then let out a chuckle. “Daolord Kongsan, I didn’t expect that you would surreptitiously set up four sealing formations while keeping watch on the gate.”

“I had thought that you would arrange for attendants of Plumesoar Hall to keep an eye on me, which was why I stayed at the gates.” Daolord Kongsan shook his head. “While keeping them distracted, I ordered my eldest disciple to quietly set up these formations. Now, it seems, the subterfuge was unnecessary. I overestimated you.”

“You certainly went to a great deal of trouble.” Ning shook his head.

“I’m impressed at how calm you are, given your situation.” Daolord Kongsan laughed coldly. “Prepare to die.”

Boom! He shot through the air at high speeds, his robes fluttering with an aura of dark mist that made him move incredibly fast, but no matter how fast he was he still couldn’t move as quickly as Ning did.

Swoosh! The black vessel easily and quickly pulled away from him, and Ning’s voice rang out once more. “Daolord Kongsan, even though we are both inside this formation, you won’t be able to catch up to me or do anything to me.”

“Is that so?” Daolord Kongsan suddenly barked, “Disciple, come out!”

Whoosh. A figure suddenly emerged on the other end of the sealing formation, passing through it and appearing within the sealed region. This was a female green-robed alien Outsider, and the area around her was flooded with green mist that caused space itself to hiss and crackle.

“Disciple, stand guard on the other side while I chase him down from this side. We’ll catch him and kill him.” Daolord Kongsan said these words aloud, not worried that Ning might overhear them.

“Yes, Master.” The green-robed woman immediately assented to his orders.

Chapter 37: Captured

"Trapping me between the two of you?" Ji Ning glanced at the two sides. No matter which way he flew, either Daolord Kongsan or his eldest disciple would be able to move closer to him. His free space would slowly lessen no matter what.

"Oh, my dear Daolord Kongsan... your eldest disciple is quite formidable, and if I hadn't mastered the nine novessence arts I wouldn't be able to do anything to her... but now?" A cold light flashed through Ning's eyes.

Whoosh. The green mist twisting around the green-robed woman began to spread out as a number of long ropes began to reach out in every direction, with her at the very center. Every single rope-type magic treasure was able to stretch out a hundred million kilometers, and she was charging straight towards Ning. Clearly, she wanted to use these ropes to further lower Ning's area of free mobility. As for Daolord Kongsan, he transformed into that endless black mist that billowed straight towards Ning.

"Daolord Kongsan, do you really think your eldest disciple will be able to capture me?" Ning's voice rang out.

"Even if she can't, she can at least tie you down," Daolord Kongsan replied coldly. "There's nowhere for you to run. No matter where you go, you will die."

The green-robed woman was quite strong, fairly close to Patriarch Clearwind in power when he wasn't using his killer attack. As Daolord Kongsan saw it, no matter how freakishly talented this Daolord of the Second Step was, even if she failed in capturing him she would still be able to slow him down.

"Is that so?" Ning smiled coldly. Swoosh! His black vessel began to flee at high speeds, and perhaps by accident it moved closer and closer towards the green-robed woman.

Daolord Kongsan wasn't surprised in the slightest. In the end, Ning had to choose a direction, and Kongsan's eldest disciple was naturally a bit

weaker than Kongsan himself. It made sense for Ning to move in her direction.

"Disciple, kill him if you can. If you can't, slow him down. Once I arrive, I'll crush him to death," Daolord Kongsan sent mentally.

"I definitely won't disappoint you, Master," the green-robed woman replied.

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The green-robed woman was moving closer and closer to Ning. Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Her magic ropes stretched out through the skies like giant pythons which coiled and lashed out against Ning.

"Ahahah!" Ning stood there at the prow of his black vessel, his two hands gripped around a single sword. He struck out, sending a dazzling streak of sword-light out ten million kilometers and striking against one of the ropes.

Daolord Kongsan was skilled in close combat, and for now Ning wasn't confident in fighting him up close. But this eldest disciple? She was the perfect match for Ning. In the end, his close combat skills had the greatest latent potential for further development. His nine novessence arts were more powerful, true, but they had already reached the level of complete mastery. In the future, he would only be able to strengthen it by making it fit into his sword-arts, but there was a limit to how much stronger they would grow.

"This kid..." Daolord Kongsan couldn't help but feel shocked by what he was seeing from afar. "What incredible sword-arts."

Ning and the green-robed woman had moved closer and closer to each other, and the two had entered close combat. The green-robed woman actually reduced the range of each rope to be merely a million kilometers, causing them to grow noticeably more powerful. When the ropes were too long, they would naturally become harder to control and thus would be weakened.

Ning brought out all six of his swords, fighting to his heart's content and

actually holding the upper hand.

"He's actually slightly more powerful than my disciple?" Daolord Kongsan's face tightened slightly as he picked up the pace. "Keep him tied down, disciple."

"Don't worry, Master. The kid has extremely profound sword-arts, but he's on par with me at most." The green-robed woman didn't want to admit defeat in the face of a Daolord of the Second Step.

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Time slowly trickled on. The green-robed woman's techniques were softer and more insidious, and a battle on this level gave Ning a few deeper-level insights into his own Dao of the Sword. Life-and-death battles, especially ones against different types of opponents, were of great benefit to him training in the Dao of the Sword.

"Hm?" Ning glanced backwards, only to see that the fast-moving black mist was about to reach him. "A pity." Ning turned to look back at the green-robed woman, then laughed, "I wanted to tussle with you for a bit longer, but your Master has arrived."

"A pity indeed." The green-robed woman spoke out as well. "You are a freakishly talented Daolord who should've been able to rise to the heavens and stun the Endless Territories... but today, you shall die and your Dao shall vanish."

Ning shook his head. Suddenly... boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

One surge of incredible power after another began to blast out from the area around Ning, each contained unbelievable amounts of force. Generally speaking, Dalords of the Fourth Step would immediately die if touched by a single one of these streaks of power, and there were nine of them roaming around in the skies. Moments later, they swiftly began to twine around each other, transforming into two dazzling streaks of sword-light.

The novessence fire, novessence water, and rest of the Five Elements techniques all joined together under the leadership of the novessence

water. Water supported all things without complaint, and was able to tolerate everything.

The novessence thunder, novessence wind, novessence light, and novessence void were led by the novessence void. The novessence void technique was the most powerful of the nine novessence arts, and it was actually capable of commanding all eight of the other arts. For it to merely command three was simplicity itself.

The two groups transformed into two enormous streaks of sword-light, which then gave birth to the Yin-Yang Sword Domain of Ning's Omega Sword Dao.

"What the hell is that?!" Daolord Kongsan was still trying to catch up, but his face instantly tightened when he saw this. He could tell that this was a technique of incredible power, but for a brief moment he wasn't able to recognize it. The Endless Territories held far too many secret arts, and in the past he had never battled against experts who had mastered the nine novessence arts.

"B-but..." The green-robed woman's face turned completely ashen as she called out, "Master, save me!"

"He won't make it." Ning glanced at the green-robed woman. Whoosh! The two enormous streaks of sword-light formed into an awesome, enormous vortex that instantly encompassed and surrounded the green-robed woman. She frantically tried to use her ropes to defend against them, but the power of the nine novessence arts when applied through the Yin-Yang Sword Domain of Ning's Omega Sword Dao was simply too powerful. There was no way she could possibly endure such an attack, and her magic treasures were knocked flying away like duckweed in a raging river.

As for the green-robed woman, she frantically tried to use other spells or magic treasures to buy herself some time, but alas they were all knocked flying away. In the blink of an eye, the enormous whirlpool had ground its way to her body.

"NO!!!!" The green-robed woman let out a resentful howl. She truly

couldn't accept this outcome. Her master was an extremely selfish and vicious man, but for the sake of growing and improving herself she had still chosen to become apprenticed to him.

Now, she was a Daolord of the Fourth Step. She was planning on helping her race survive and flourish. She couldn't die. She couldn't die!

BOOM! She had tried everything she had, but there was nothing she could do in the face of this overwhelming disparity in power. Her skills were stronger than those of ordinary Daolords of the Fourth Step, but there was no way she could possibly endure Ning's killer strike. Her body was instantly disintegrated, and as she died a hint of agony and despair flashed through her eyes.

"Eh?" Moments later, she was stunned... because part of her body was actually left undamaged. Although the terrifying vortex of sword-intent surrounded her, it no longer pressed the attack. If it did, she would be totally destroyed.

"Hurry up and get in here. Otherwise, I'll take your life." Ning tossed out a gourd which instantly flew to the green-robed woman's side and sent out a surge of overwhelming strong sucking power towards her. What remained of the green-robed woman's body didn't dare to resist, and it allowed Ning to suck her into the gourd. If Ning was going to capture her, at least she wouldn't die right away.

Ning waved his hand, causing the gourd to return to him. He then turned to look at the attacking Daolord Kongsan. "Daolord Kongsan, your eldest disciple is now in my hands," Ning said.

"Damn." Daolord Kongsan had an ugly look on his face.

"Withdraw immediately and I'll spare her life," Ning barked.

"Withdraw?" The baleful look in Daolord Kongsan's eyes only grew stronger. "No one can threaten me. She's just one disciple. Today, I shall take your life no matter what."

Seeing this, Ning just shook his head. What a madman. The information which the Skywood Sect had given him was quite accurate; Daolord

Kongsan was an exceedingly selfish man who didn't really care about his disciples, only himself. The reason he had chosen to kill Ning was not because he cared about his disciple or felt sorry for him, but because he felt as though his personal dignity had been affronted by his disciple's death.

"If that's the case, let's fight." A fierce light flashed through Ning's eyes.
"Kill!"

Rumble... those nine novessence arts once more formed into those two enormous streaks of sword-light, and they illuminated each other as they intertwined and lashed out through the skies towards the distant Daolord Kongsan.

"Attacks on this level are useless against me." Daolord Kongsan was filled with a desire to kill, and he revealed his true form as the black mist roiled around him. He stretched out with his right hand, producing an enormous, pitch-black scimitar within it.

Slash!

The enormous scimitar swept out, carrying a hint of black light on its edge. Space itself parted in a natural way in front of that edge, but not a single iota of his power leaked out. It was like space was nothing more than butter, with his knife cutting neatly through it.

The scimitar chopped out towards those nine rampaging novessence arts as the two began their midair clash.

Chapter 38: A Furious Fight

"What a terrifying scimitar." Ji Ning could sense that the flows of his nine novessence arts were being parted as though they had been split in half. "But my secret arts were formless to begin with!"

If you cut a stream of water with a knife, the water would continue to flow. Ning's nine novessence arts of lightning, wind, fire, void, and everything else were all types of formless energy that could assume whatever shape he chose.

In the face of that terrifying scimitar, the rampaging flood of the novessence arts was instantly split in half. Despite that, the power of the secret arts didn't lessen at all, and two dragon-like streams of sword-light continued onwards towards Daolord Kongsan.

"Not good." Daolord Kongsan's face paled, and the black mist around him instantly became far denser and thicker than before. Boom! Boom! Boom! The sword-light formed by the novessence arts were able to transform into many forms. They instantly transformed into eighteen different streams of sword-light, each of which was violent beyond care. Filled with the sword-intent of the Omega Sword Dao's Blood Drop stance, they forcibly pierced through the black mist!

In truth, Ning's nine novessence arts were far stronger than Daolord Kongsan's darkness-based secret arts, and so penetrating them was very simple.

"Heavenbreaker!" As soon as those eighteen streams of sword-light pierced through the black mist, they suddenly transformed. They became like eighteen whips of flowing water that furiously lashed out, striking Daolord Kongsan on his body.

Ever since Ning had come up with his Omega Sword Dao, he had been able to perfectly join together all different types of sword-arts and Sword Daos. This was why his attacks could seem incredibly soft and yet unleash a dominating display of sword-intent.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! These eighteen streaks of sword-light

contained both the criss-crossing power of the Yin-Yang stance as well as the ferocity of the Heavenbreaker stance. Daolord Kongsan was forced to instantly transform his body into darkness itself. The sword-light roamed through the darkness unimpeded, causing his form to shudder a few times, but he was able to easily endure the strike.

"What formidable secret arts. Your sword-intent roams everywhere, letting no opening go untouched." Daolord Kongsan's face suddenly appeared from that pool of darkness, and he had a cold smile on his face as he spoke.

"It does indeed leave no opening untouched," the distant Ning said. "My secret arts are formless like water; of course they flow over and into everything. But precisely because of that, they aren't particularly powerful when I use them to display these sword-arts."

You could use a stream of water to stab or to whip someone, but there was no way it would ever hit as hard as an actual weapon meant for those purposes. Weapons were both tougher and sharper.

"Omega Sword Dao, Yin-Yang." Ning's gaze turned cold. Rumble... instantly, the energy of the nine novessence arts began to crush and grind down upon everything within a hundred million kilometers. Yin and Yang criss-crossed with each other, grinding away at each other and everything between them. Even though Daolord Kongsan had transformed into darkness incarnate, he could still sense how terrifying this Yin-Yang Sword Domain was, and it was suppressing and restraining him from every possible angle.

"Damn." Daolord Kongsan felt as though he had been trapped in quicksand. Ning's secret arts were simply too strong, and they were omnipresent; there was no way Daolord Kongsan could completely block them. Or at least, there was no way he could use his secret arts or magic treasures to block them.

"I had thought that by using my nine novessence arts, I would be able to cause him serious injury even though I probably wouldn't be able to kill him. Daolord Kongsan truly does have a virtually indestructible body.

There's no way to injure him at all." Ning couldn't help but sigh. He had already unleashed his most powerful attacks, but all he was able to do was to suppress this foe.

In the end, Ning simply was at too low a level. His Omega Sword Dao might be formidable, but he was still just a Daolord of the First Step

Daolord Allgod was a grandmaster of formations and had reached a much higher level than Ning was currently at. When he used those nine same arts alongside his formations, his power was much greater than Ning's was.

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While Ning was sighing to himself, he had no idea just how stunned and furious Daolord Kongsan was. Daolord Kongsan was a venerable Verge-level Daolord who had roamed the Endless Territories for many years... but today, he was actually being beaten down by a Daolord of the Second Step?

"GRAAH!" The endless darkness suddenly released a low, furious growl. Instantly, the darkness quickly began to solidify into a black silhouette that had a noticeably more powerful aura than before, and which was wielding an enormous scimitar.

"Kid, you should feel proud that you've forced me to use my supreme attack. Now die!" The blurry black silhouette instantly charged towards Ning as he furiously chopped towards Ning with that enormous scimitar.

This chop caused spacetime to freeze. It was filled with a towering killing intent that struck out from incredibly far away, slamming directly through Ning's body as it struck against his soul. Ning was still standing at the prow of his distant black vessel, but he could still clearly sense a soul attack of immense power striking at him.

"Hmph!" Within Ning's sea of consciousness, his soul let out a furious snort. The murderous intent slammed towards Ning's soul like a wave, but Ning's soul was completely unmoved. It was comparable to the soul of a Daolord of the Fourth Step, after all, and his heartforce was at the point where he could break through to the sixth stage of heartforce at any

moment. Once he did, he would be a true Heartforce Cultivator! Less than 1% of Daolords were Heartforce Cultivators, and so this enormous advantage in terms of heartforce made Ning's mental and soul defenses incredibly strong.

In addition, Ning had already read an intelligence report stating that Daolord Kongsan had a soul attack, but the attack was only able to confuse and disrupt; it wasn't all that powerful. In the end, Daolord Kongsan was most skilled in close combat!

"Eh?!" The distant Daolord Kongsan looked at Ning both angrily and expectantly.

"Daolord Kongsan, did you really think you would be able to shake my soul with an attack on this level?" Ning laughed coldly.

Daolord Kongsan was shocked. It was true that soul attacks weren't his forte, but the soul attack wasn't a weak one either. Daolord Kongsan felt certain that this mere Daolord of the Second Step had to have a fairly weak soul, even if he did have a fairly high level of insight into the Dao. Logically speaking, the soul should've been an enormous weak point. Even Daolords of the Fourth Step would've been confused and impacted by his soul attack.

"You aren't bad at all, kid. But if you are really so tough, stop running and fight me in close combat!" Daolord Kongsan bellowed angrily as he flew towards Ning.

"Haha, I'm just a Daolord of the Second Step! You want me to fight in you in close combat? Do you have any sense of shame? If I broke through to become a Daolord of the Third Step, I'd be more than happy to fight you in close combat." Riding his black vessel, Ning was able to easily pull away from Daolord Kongsan once more. He also continued to use his nine novessence arts to either slow down or attack Daolord Kongsan repeatedly.

Daolord Kongsan was getting angrier and angrier as this 'fight' continued. Ning continued to flee, and he continued to chase. Ning had it quite easy in this battle, as he continued to attack while fleeing thanks to

his overwhelming advantage in speed.

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"If this continues... I really won't be able to do anything to this kid at all." Daolord Kongsan shook his head. "If memory serves, the secret arts this kid is using should be the nine novessence arts of the legendary Daolord Allgod." The reason why hadn't recognized the technique earlier was because he had never personally battled it before, but he had read the description of the techniques within the Spellworld. After having battled against Ning for so long, he had some insights into what it was that he was up against.

"I really wonder how a Daolord of the Second Step like him was able to master such terrifying secret arts," Daolord Kongsan mused. "I heard that in order to master those nine novessence arts, you not only need to have certain insights into the likes of lightning, wind, and fire, you also have to be a grandmaster alchemist; if your alchemy skills are even the slightest bit deficient, you will never be able to master the nine novessence arts. Is this Daolord of the Second Step a grandmaster alchemist?!" Even Kongsan was secretly speechless.

"If he is... there's no way he could've learned alchemy by himself. He either won an incredibly powerful legacy or has an incredibly powerful teacher behind him." After having battled for so long, Daolord Kongsan was starting to grow wary of Ning. This person definitely wouldn't be as easy to deal with as the other Daolords of the Fourth Step he had slain.

"Screw it. I'll capture him alive first! If he really does have a powerful figure behind him... hmpf. I'm a core member of the Dao Alliance. Very few people are qualified to threaten me. When the time comes, I'll chat with him a bit. I can force the kid to swear a few lifeblood oaths, then let him go." Daolord Kongsan mused to himself, "But if he doesn't have any powerful figures behind him, I can do whatever I want to him."

Whoosh. Daolord Kongsan sent his will outside the grand sealing formation and towards one of the hundred thousand estates located at the margins of Skywood City. Aside from Kongsan, there were a few other

incredibly powerful and ancient Daolords who lived in seclusion in those estates.

“Big brother Shaka.” Daolord Kongsan instantly sent mentally, “I’m embarrassed to say this, but it seems I’ll need to ask you to help me out and capture the kid.”

Within the estate. A handsome man with long golden hair and a golden suit of armor was seated in the lotus position inside a courtyard, staring at the heavens. He looked like an ordinary cultivator, but in truth he was a terrifyingly strong Aberrant. Amongst the ancient figures who lived in seclusion in Skywood City, he was reputedly the fastest of them all. The Dao Alliance was an extremely welcoming and open organization, allowing members of the Brightshore Kingdom, the Aberrants, and even the Ancient cultivators to live within their cities. Only their mortal enemies, the Aeonians, were refused entry by the Dao Alliance. And of course, the Dark Kingdom.

“Kongsan, he seems to just be a Daolord of the Second Step. You really can’t catch him yourself?” A gleam of purple light flashed through Daolord Shaka’s eyes.

“I really cannot. This kid has way too many tricks up his sleeve, which is why I’ve come to ask you for help, big brother Shaka.”

Chapter 39: Summoning Friends

"Describe all of his abilities to me in detail," Daolord Shaka said. He wouldn't agree to a request like this lightly; he had to first see what sort of abilities this Daolord of the Second Step possessed.

"I'll narrate to them to you." Since Daolord Kongsan was asking this man to help out, it wasn't appropriate for him to hold anything back. He gave a quick explanation, then continued, "Don't worry, big brother Shaka. I also have the feeling that he probably has a significant background, given how talented he is. To be safe, we should first capture him and then see if anyone comes to save him. If an Emperor comes for him, we'll ransom him for a pretty price. If no one comes from him, we'll just kill him."

Daolord Shaka nodded. "Alright." Neither of the two were the cowardly, trouble-fearing type. Kongsan was a core member of the Dao Alliance, while Daolord Shaka was a high-level member of the Aberrants. The kid might have powerful backers, but so did they. The only reason they were planning to capture Ning first was to avoid causing unnecessary trouble.

"I'll agree to help you here," Daolord Shaka said.

"Thank you, big brother Shaka." Daolord Kongsan was delighted.

Swoosh! Daolord Shaka instantly transformed into a streak of light that disappeared into the skies as it hastened towards the grand sealing formation.

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Within the sealing formation. Daolord Kongsan continued to chase after the fleeing Ji Ning as the two continuously exchanged attacks against each other.

"He can't do anything to me." Ning was extremely clear-headed despite the battle's progression. "Daolord Kongsan himself knows this quite well. He won't just let things drag out like this; he must be coming up with a plan! But it won't matter what he has up his sleeve; I won't let him do as

he wishes."

"Mm." Ning immediately sent a mental message, "Send word to the Brightshore Kingdom right away that I am in a grand sealing formation outside Skywood City and am being pursued and attacked by Daolord Kongsan. I would like to ask the fellow Daoists of the Brightshore Kingdom to help out. The duration of this request is a single day."

"Yes, Master." The alien World-level retainer who had been with Ning this entire time immediately acknowledged the order. This retainer had another clone in the Brightshore Kingdom, and so was able to make the report almost immediately. Moments later, the Brightshore Kingdom sent word to every single Daolord and Emperor within its ranks.

In truth, in recent years Ning had received quite a few distress calls as well, but they were all too far away from him. This time, for example, Ning himself had said that the duration of his request was a single day! If others couldn't make it here within a single day, there was no point to them even coming. If they were too far away, they would only find at the end of their long journey that the matter had come to an end long ago.

"But asking for the Brightshore Kingdom to help out is just a precaution," Ning mused. "In the end, it doesn't have that many Daolords. The number of Daolords it has who can deal with Kongsan are even fewer. Although this is one of the eight Sacred Cities and there should be quite a few members of the Brightshore Kingdom here, it's hard to say if there are any who can match Kongsan."

"I suppose I'll have to wait and see. If there's nothing I can do, I'll use up the Hegemon's Dao-seal," Ning mused. You always had to have a backup plan.

The Dao of the Sword was an offensive Dao, and so the Sword Hegemon's Dao-seal possessed terrifying offensive power. Even Eternal Emperors would deeply desire an item of such incredible value. However, the path of cultivation was a long one, and this affair with Daolord Kongsan might be nothing more than a minor bump in this long road. Ning wasn't willing to use up his Dao-seal unless absolutely necessary.

But of course... if it WAS absolutely necessary, then he would simply use it! Once he used it up, he would win all of the treasures which Daolord Kongsan possessed. However, in Ning's eyes not even all of the combined treasures Daolord Kongsan possessed were as important as his Hegemon's Dao-seal.

A short while later...

"Hahaha!" Daolord Kongsan suddenly began to laugh. "Let's see how much longer you can keep fleeing, kid." Ning's face tightened. Daolord Kongsan suddenly pointed off into the distance. Instantly, a golden figure flew through the distant barrier, followed by the barrier once more being sealed shut.

The golden figure was that of a handsome, golden-haired man dressed in golden armor. He glanced at Ning curiously, then slowly shook his head and said, "Kid, it's quite rare and impressive for a Daolord of the Second Step to be as strong as you are. What a true pity."

"Please help me, big brother Shaka, in capturing him," Daolord Kongsan said.

"Shaka?" Ning's face turned pale. "Daolord Shaka of the Aberrants?"

Daolord Shaka was an incredibly famous Daolord of the Aberrants, and that fame came from his incredible speed. He was one of those figures who could go more than a hundred times faster than the speed of light! In speed alone, he was superior to the vast majority of Eternal Emperors. And, as an Aberrant, he was incredibly fast and powerful in close combat as well."

"It seems I'll have to use the Hegemon's Dao-seal after all." A sharp light flashed through Ning's eyes.

"Kid, I recommend you give up," Daolord Shaka said calmly. He had absolute faith in his overwhelming speed.

"Kongsan! Stay your hand!" A cold shout rang out from afar, going through the barrier and reverberating within the world inside it. The people outside the formation were unable to see what was going on inside,

but those inside it were able to see and hear what was happening outside with perfect clarity.

“Eh?” Daolord Kongsan and Daolord Shaka both looked outside, as did Ning. Two figures had appeared outside the formation. One was a skinny, white-haired, middle-aged man. The other was a muscular man with a giant greataxe on his back who had a single horn in the middle of his head.

“Kongsan, stay your hand. Release Darknorth!” The skinny, white-haired man said coldly.

“Daolord Soleman? Daolord Skyaxe?” Daolord Kongsan’s face tightened.

“Palace Lord Soleman?” Within the formation, Ning revealed a look of delight as well. Lord Soleman was the Vice Palace Lord of the Heartforce Palace! Other Daolords of the Fourth Step might be strong or weak, but every single one who was also a Heartforce Power possessed terrifying power. Daolord Soleman, as the Vice Palace Lord of the Heartforce Palace of the Brightshore Kingdom, was also an incredibly powerful figure whose name alone was enough to terrify countless cultivators. Heartforce Cultivator Daolords simply possessed far too many strange ways to kill people. Sometimes, a single glance from them was enough to slay.

As for Daolord Skyaxe, he wasn’t a member of the Brightshore Kingdom; he was probably just accompanying Daolord Soleman and so came over as well. However, Daolord Skyaxe was one of the most freakishly powerful of Daolords who had most likely devised and joined together multiple different Supreme Daos. He was ranked as the number five Daolord of this era in the Endless Territories.

“Darknorth? The kid over here?” Daolord Kongsan laughed coldly.

“Release him,” Daolord Soleman barked.

“Soleman, if I release him just because you told me to, I would have no face left,” Daolord Shaka said coldly.

“Daolord Soleman, Daolord Skyaxe, next to me is big brother Shaka,” Daolord Kongsan said. Soleman and Skyaxe were outside the formation

and so weren't able to see anything inside of it at all.

Although there was a ranking of power in the Endless Territories, ranks didn't count for everything. For example, an incredibly powerful Daolord's abilities might be perfectly countered by a lower-ranked Daolord's abilities! Palace Lord Dawnstar might be in trouble if he encountered an ancient, incredibly powerful Eternal Emperor, but someone like Daolord Shaka would be able to escape thanks to his incredible speed. Everyone had their own strengths and weaknesses; those who stood at the very top ranks amongst Daolords all had their own pride and rarely submitted to others.

If Kongsan encountered Soleman and Skyaxe by himself... he was strong enough to stay alive, but he'd still feel trepidation. Now that Daolord Shaka, a Daolord even more powerful than himself, was by his side... he felt much more confidence.

"Soleman, Skyaxe, the two of you don't have the right or the power to demand me to release this kid," Daolord Shaka said.

"Attack!" Daolord Soleman was instantly enraged. "Break this formation apart!"

BOOM! The nearby Daolord Skyaxe was enraged as well. He immediately attacked, and when he did the world itself seemed to tremble, and even Skywood City itself seemed to turn dim. Endless yellow illusions filled the vast area surrounding Skywood City. Moments later, a terrifying greataxe struck out from within the yellow illusions and chopped downwards towards the grand sealing formation. In terms of using raw power to break apart formations, Daolord Soleman clearly wasn't as strong as Daolord Skyaxe.

"What's going on? What's with this terrifying aura?" Quite a few cultivators within Skywood City were surprised by the commotion.

BOOM! The grand sealing formation shook a few times and a few ripples appeared on the surface of the barrier, but it managed to endure the blow.

"Hahaha! Daolord Skyaxe, if I was forced to fight you in combat I would

have no choice but to turn tail and flee. It would be a joke, however, if you could overwhelm me even through these formations I've set down." Daolord Kongsan's voice echoed from within the formation.

"Damn." Daolord Skyaxe was infuriated.

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"They won't be able to help you." Daolord Kongsan turned his head to stare at Ning, still aboard his black vessel.

"If you aren't willing to just surrender... then we'll be forced to simply capture you alive. Let's see what Soleman and Skyaxe can do about it. Last time we met in the Terror Starsea, he caused me to lose face. Does he really think I'll just give way to him this time?" Daolord Shaka snickered, then transformed into a streak of light that instantly moved more than a hundred times the speed of light.

Aboard the black vessel, Ning let out a long sigh. "It seems I'll have to use the Hegemon's Dao-seal after all." Murder flickered in Ning's eyes.

Chapter 40: Hegemon's Dao-Seal

Outside the grand sealing formation. Soleman and Skyaxe were both furious but helpless.

Within the grand sealing formation. Daolord Kongsan was smirking from afar. It looked as though things had been settled! Daolord Shaka had transformed into a dazzling, breathtakingly eye-catching streak of golden light as he charged towards Ning. He truly was moving extremely fast, but Ji Ning was able to see him moving with perfect clarity. There was a sensation of time itself being distorted, which caused Ning to feel rather uncomfortable.

Ning continued to calmly fly forwards on his black vessel, and a dark blue crystalline leaf suddenly appeared in his hand.

Crack! A seemingly simple action, the crushing of a leaf... but the terrifying, overwhelming amount of power hidden within that leaf-shaped Dao-seal was finally unleashed! The deceased Sword Hegemon had paid an enormous price to create this terrifying Dao-seal before his death, and the power within it was truly inconceivable.

"What terrifying power. So this... this is the might of a Hegemon." When Ning crushed the seal, he instantly sensed a surge of unfathomable power flood through him and come under his control.

He was the guide, the conduit for this power. He had the right to tell it where to strike, and that was where it would strike. He could also allow the power to voluntarily disperse.

"Go, then. Kill them." Ning turned his gaze to Daolord Shaka, soaring towards him like a streak of golden light, as well as the distant Daolord Kongsan.

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BOOM! An awesome display of power burst forth. It was like the darkness before the dawn was suddenly split by the first rays of the sun which cast its radiance over the land. The streak of sunlight shone down

upon the hearts of both Daolord Shaka and Daolord Kongsan!

“NO!!!!” Looks of utter horror appeared on the faces of both of them. As soon as that overwhelming burst of force first revealed its true, terrifying luster, both of their hearts were filled with the utmost terror. They wouldn’t feel such terror even in the face of death itself, but the overwhelming power of a Hegemon caused them to feel a sense of uncontrollable terror. This was something which came from the very depths of their souls.

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Outside the formation. The faces of Daolord Soleman and Daolord Skyaxe both changed as well. Although they weren’t able to see what was happening inside the formation, a sensation of complete and utter terror filled their hearts.

“Retreat.”

“Retreat immediately!”

This was the only thought which entered their minds: Get as far away from this place as possible!

They could sense that something terrifying was about to happen within the formation! Perhaps the terrifying power within it wasn’t aimed directly at them, but they still couldn’t help but feel a sense of fear.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Both retreated immediately.

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Within Skywood City.

Most of the cultivators were too distant from the grand sealing formation, and so when Ning shattered the Hegemon’s Dao-seal they didn’t sense much when its power was unleashed. The two most powerful figures inside the city, however, able to sense it clearly.

“I just sensed an enormous burst of power.” Emperor Skywood turned his head, staring towards the distant grand sealing formation.

“Yes. The power is tremendous.” The old man with tousled blue hair

facing him nodded solemnly as well. “I can sense that it is strong enough to threaten the two of us. Skywood, this is your territory. How could there be such a strong burst of power here? It must have been generated from one of those strange treasures that was brought back from the Terror Starsea. That, or it had to be a single-use Dao-seal or another similar type of treasure which was personally crated by a Hegemon.”

Emperor Skywood nodded as well, then chuckled. “It’s been a long time since I’ve sensed anything that could threaten me. Let’s go take a look.”

“Kill!” Ning guided that terrifying surge of Sword Dao power forward.

BOOM! The enormous, terrifying illusion of a greatsword suddenly appeared in the area around Ning. As soon as the greatsword appeared, both space and time were completely squeezed and compressed. Daolord Shaka and Daolord Kongsan were both so terrified that they went numb. This was a level of power which they were completely unprepared to handle!

“Damn, damn, damn! Damn that Kongsan. How could he have offended a freak like this?!?” Daolord Shaka’s heart was filled with shock, rage, and resentment. “What sort of incredible fortune did this freak stumble upon? How could he have such a monstrously powerful treasure? Not even the protective treasure which the Hegemon bestowed upon me might not be able to resist this terrifying sword.”

A translucent bottle suddenly appeared out of nowhere within the palm of Daolord Shaka’s hand. Within the bottle was a crystalline speck of sand. Daolord Shaka felt such sorrow that it was as though blood was dripping out of his heart. This was an ancient relic he had acquired after countless years of braving dangerous territories, and was the most powerful protective treasure he had ever acquired. He hadn’t expected that he would have to use it up because of his decision to help Daolord Kongsan.

Crack! The bottle was shattered, and the sand within it instantly emitted a soft, blurry glow that covered Daolord Shaka. Whoosh! The light-covered form of Daolord Shaka instantly disappeared without a trace, as

though he had never even been here.

"N-no. How could I, Kongsan, die in a place like this? Impossible."

Daolord Kongsan instantly produced two strange treasures in his hands. He immediately shattered them without even pausing.

These two different treasures, when shattered, produced two different surges of power. The first surge of power sought to influence the local spacetime and change the trajectory of the impending giant sword illusion. Alas, the surge of power instantly disappeared, because it was powerless against the sword. As for the second surge of power, it was applied to Daolord Kongsan himself. It transformed into an enormous globe of water that covered his body.

BOOM!!!

The enormous sword came slashing down. Space and time both came to a halt as all things were sheared away by its power. It chopped down upon the giant globe of water, which was instantly shattered by this overwhelmingly dominating sword. As for Daolord Kongsan, he had already transformed into darkness incarnate within that water globe. But in the face of that terrifying sword illusion... he melted away like snow in summer. His body of darkness incarnate was completely unable to help him. When the sword-light chopped down, the region of darkness dissipated into nothingness.

Daolord Kongsan had perished!

Whoosh! The enormous illusion of a greatsword continued forwards to chop through the grand sealing formation, easily piercing through it and continuing to charge forwards. It then flew into the skies, out of this everworld, and into the distant primordial chaos.

"Dissipate!" Ning willed it, and that terrifying illusion of a greatsword quickly dissipated. Its power spread out into trillions of tiny streams that swept out in every direction, causing the primordial chaos itself to tremble.

"Daolord Kongsan." Ning's body flickered as he instantly moved as though by teleportation through the void to appear at the place where

Daolord Kongsan died. Ning glanced at the treasures that lay there in midair, then shook his head. “I didn’t imagine that this sword would shatter even Daolord Kongsan’s storage treasures. A few of the items inside remain, though.” Ning waved his hand, gathering all of the remaining treasures of Daolord Kongsan.

Daolord Kongsan actually had several storage estate-treasures. Some of the weaker ones had been crushed, as had many of the treasures stored within them. However, his top-grade Eternal estate-treasures were scarred but still whole.

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After putting away Daolord Kongsan’s treasures, Ning turned to glance off into the distance. Earlier, he had seen Daolord Shaka flee. Fleeing wasn’t that impressive, actually. For example, Ning himself had that spacetime disc which the almighty Hegemon had given him. If he had been faced with a similar attack, he might’ve been able to flee as well. But of course, Ning wouldn’t dare say that he was completely certain in his chances, and he wouldn’t be so foolish as to actually test it out.

“Darknorth.” Two distant figures flew towards him from afar.

Ning turned to look at them. It was Daolord Soleman and Daolord Skyaxe. They had fled in terror moments ago, but now they had flown back.

“Senior apprentice-brother Soleman.” Ning hurriedly flew over and said courteously, “Thank you and Daolord Skyaxe so much for coming here to rescue me.”

The Daolords of Brightshore Kingdom all referred to each other as equals of the same generation. Even when Ning was merely at the World level, he still addressed Palace Lord Woodflower as senior apprentice-brother Woodflower.

“Haha, we didn’t really save you; you saved yourself.” Daolord Soleman glanced at the white-robed youth with quite a bit of curiosity. This was his first time meeting Ning; in the past, he had only heard stories of Ning from Solewind. “Darknorth, you sent a request to the Brightshore

Kingdom to ask the other Daolords to help out because you didn't wish to use up that precious treasure, I assume?"

"That treasure was absolutely extraordinary." The nearby Daolord Skyaxe sighed in praise as well. "It truly was powerful. Anyone who wants to rely on their own powers to survive such an attack would absolutely have to have the most supreme of protective divine abilities."

Ning nodded. That attack wasn't necessarily omnipotent; for example, Daolord Shaka had been able to escape. Certain divine abilities that could make the body comparable to top-grade Eternal treasures might also allow for survival! However, such techniques were incredibly rare and valuable, and to actually reach such a level was extremely difficult. Ning had a Hegemon's legacy, but had still only been able to train his body to the low-grade Eternal treasure level.

"I really didn't want to use it up, but I had no choice," Ning said.

"Come, come! I've heard about you from Solewind long ago, and it seems you truly are an incredible figure. Come have some wine at my estate," Daolord Soleman said with a laugh.

"Perhaps other powers from the Brightshore Kingdom will come here as well." Ning hesitated a bit. "I should..."

He had notified the Brightshore Kingdom for anyone within a day's travel of Skywood City to come help him fight against Daolord Kongsan. Some of them might be on their way even now. If they arrived only to be unable to locate Ning... that would be inappropriate of Ning.

"Simple." Daolord Soleman chuckled. "Just send another message through the Brightshore Kingdom. Just say that anyone who can reach Skywood City within a day should come visit Daolord Soleman's residence."

"Haha, I was foolish not to think of this." Ning immediately sent another message to the Brightshore Kingdom.

"Come, come!" Daolord Soleman urged.

"Absolutely." Ning nodded.

And so Ji Ning, Daolord Soleman, and Daolord Skyaxe transformed into streaks of light and flew towards Skywood City.

Chapter 41: Dao Alliance, Palace of Immortals

A mysterious place far, far away.

This was a secret realm which was atop a towering tree which was countless kilometers tall. Near this giant tree, there was a lake that was overflowing with spiritual energy, and next to the lake sat a grim-looking man dressed in black imperial robes and who wore a crown on his head. The man was seated in the lotus position. This was Prince Greatjoy, and with every single breath he took he seemed to draw the spiritual energy of the lake into his body.

“Eh?” Prince Greatjoy couldn’t help but reveal a smile when he heard the news his servant brought him. “It seems as though Darknorth has dealt with his problems. How impressive. He was able to hold off Daolord Kongsan long enough to buy time for senior apprentice-brother Soleman to save him.”

“I am now a Daolord of the Second Step. I have gone through many dangerous places and profited from them, but I wouldn’t be able to survive Daolord Kongsan if I fought him head-on. Still... this treasure of mine should allow me to escape through my control of spacetime.” Prince Greatjoy quite smugly produced a fist-sized seed. This seed was quite strange, and it seemed to throw the surrounding field of spacetime into a state of flux.

“All the suffering and trouble I went through in this place was worth it, now that I’ve found this. The real problem for me... is how to get out!” Prince Greatjoy was rather irritated by this. “This is such an enormous place, but there are no other living creatures here save for myself.”

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The darkness of outer space. An enormous beast was roaring furiously within the void, and opposite it stood Waterlord Firesurge. Firesurge was battling the creature in close combat, using vicious, accurate, and cruel

strikes. His two hands would occasionally transform into streams of water that were filled with overwhelming amounts of power.

Crunch! The beast was already so heavily wounded that it could no longer fight back. Waterlord Firesurge managed to grip it by the throat using his enormous, watery right hand.

“Do you submit or not? If you do not submit, you will die!” Waterlord Firesurge’s eyes were filled with a sinister, murderous look.

“I’m willing to submit.” The beast hesitated for a moment, then finally lowered its head. Only then did Waterlord Firesurge produce a silver collar which was covered with divine runes. He casually waved his hand, causing the silver collar to fly out and encircle the beast’s neck. Moments later, it vanished entirely. As for the beast, it immediately became far more obedient.

“Eh?” Waterlord Firesurge frowned. “It seems Darknorth has grown much more powerful. He was actually able to buy himself enough time while being hunted by Daolord Kongsan for Daolord Soleman to save him? It seems that the difference between Darknorth myself is still significant. No... no! I have to be the strongest one. Greatjoy, Solewind, Darknorth... I will surpass them all.”

Whoosh. Waterlord Firesurge waved his hand, collecting the beast. His body then flickered as he disappeared into the void.

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Within an ordinary mortal city in an ordinary mortal world. There were a number of roving patrols within this city, as well as a number of small-time merchants and commoners. There were quite a few beggars as well. A bald, thin, red-robed youth was walking through the streets of this city.

“Hey kid!” The youth suddenly walked towards a child beggar, then said in a soft voice, “I can sense the endless rage, hatred, and resentment festering in your heart. I’ll give you a special opportunity. Seize it, and you will have a chance to become the ruler of this kingdom, the most powerful figure here. But of course, it’s also possible that you will descend into the deepest hells, never to recover. Are you willing to give it a try?”

The child beggar was speechless. He glanced sideways at the other beggars and even the passerbys, but no one was looking at him. It was as though no one had even heard the treasonous words the red-robed youth had said to him.

"Me? The ruler of this kingdom?" The child beggar's voice was clear and crisp, but it was also quavering.

"Right." The red-robed youth nodded.

"I'm willing." The child beggar gritted his teeth, then knelt down and kowtowed.

"Then go." The red-robed youth waved his hand, causing a streak of light to fly into the beggar's body. Moments later, the red-robed youth disappeared.

"Where'd he go?!" The child beggar frantically scanned his surroundings, but was completely unable to locate that youth. "My body...?" The child beggar could suddenly sense that his body was filled with an overwhelming, shocking amount of strength. He lowered his head and used his finger to poke at the rock beneath his feet... and his finger pierced straight through it. He couldn't help but feel wildly overjoyed. Moments later, his head started to hurt slightly as an enormous amount of information began to flood into it. This was a cultivation technique.

Far away, in the skies. The red-robed youth, Daolord Solewind, was staring downwards and watching all this happen. He nodded slightly. "I've already left behind thirty thousand seeds within this chaosworld. Now, let's see how this world develops."

Some cultivators needed to go out adventuring through dangerous places. However, other cultivators did not have to. Daolord Solewind's path was that of a Heartforce Cultivator, and his path was a different one entirely.

For another example, Daolord Badlands's path was the Dao of Numerancy. Even as a Daolord of the Third Step, he was already one of the top three divination experts in all the Endless Territories. Once he took one more step and became a Daolord of the Fourth Step, he'd undergo a

fundamental change. Most likely, he would be ranked number one in divination in all the Endless Territories. His close combat abilities might not be overly impressive, but he would be ranked as one of the most difficult foes to deal with in the entire universe.

If you wanted to kill him, he would be able to sense it well in advance and have more than enough time to flee and hide. If he wanted to kill you, he would be able to set the most intricate of plots against you, calculating everything with precision. This was why the Dao of Numerancy was so terrifying. However, Daolord Badlands' path was clearly an extremely difficult one to travel. Otherwise, how could he have reached such incredible heights in Numerancy despite merely being at the third step? As a result, reaching the fourth step would be extremely difficult as well.

"Oh? It seems brother Darknorth has managed to survive the dangerous situation he was in. Impressive." Daolord Solewind nodded slightly. "Big brother Soleman is already at the Verge. Compared to him, I'm still lacking as a Heartforce Cultivator."

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The two messages Ning sent out to the Brightshore Kingdom caused quite a few of its Daolords and Emperors to become aware of his troubles. Lord Woodflower and the others let out sighs of relief when they heard the good news. They also realized that word of how Daolord Darknorth of the Sword Palace was able to survive Daolord Kongsan's assault would surely spread. Soon, he would most assuredly stand at the very peak of power in the Endless Territories. He would become one of the most freakishly strong Daolords in existence.

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Skywood City. The empty space outside and above the city. Two figures appeared within the empty void. It was Emperoer Skywood and the blue-haired elder.

"What a powerful remnant sword-intent." Emperor Skywood said softly, "This is definitely a Hegemon's sword-intent."

"A Hegemon's sword-intent? But none of the three Hegemons of the

Endless Territories are skilled in the Dao of the Sword.” The blue-haired elder was instantly puzzled. “Could it have come from the Terror Starsea?”

“Yes. It most likely was generated from one of the curios that can be found in the Terror Starsea.” Emperor Skywood nodded. “Let me take a closer look.”

Whoosh. The surrounding field of spacetime quickly began to flow in reverse... but as it did, some sort of invisible, terrifying power seemed to disrupt the process, causing the technique to dissipate.

“I’m not able to reverse it.” Emperor Skywood frowned when he saw this. “That surge of sword-intent was simply too strong. It completely disrupted the local fabric of spacetime. There’s no way for me to see what happened in the past here.”

“Then take a look at what happened right afterwards,” the blue-haired elder laughed.

“All I can see is what happened after that burst of power.” Emperor Skywood nodded. The Sword Hegemon’s Dao-seal was simply too powerful, disrupting even a temporal inversion spell to scry what had happened here. Everything that had ever happened here since the Sword Hegemon’s Dao-seal was used had been rendered completely un-scryable. Only someone incredibly talented in the Dao of Spacetime, such as the Brightshore Hegemon, might be able to reverse spacetime here.

Instantly, scenes from earlier began to replay, revealing a shattered formation and a white-robed youth waving his hand, taking away Daolord Kongsan’s treasures.

“Those are Kongsan’s treasures. He was the only one who left anything behind?” Emperor Skywood murmured softly, “It seems Kongsan was the only one to die to that strike.”

The scene of the white-robed youth chatting with Daolord Soleman and Daolord Skyaxe played next.

“It seems that Hegemon’s Dao-seal was used by that kid.” Emperor Skywood pointed at Ning’s form.

"Yes. Judging from what they are saying, the kid should be a member of the Brightshore Kingdom." The blue-haired elder nodded.

Emperor Skywood shook his head and laughed. "The Hegemon of the Brightshore Kingdom often abducts World-level cultivators from other areas, and he has a good eye for talent; he really can pick out quite a few exceptionally talented fellows! This young fellow named Darknorth is a member of our Dao Alliance, but he still ended up being abducted by the Hegemon."

"The Brightshore Hegemon knows his boundaries. He doesn't really abduct all that many, and he only goes after World-level cultivators," the blue-haired elder said.

"Come over here." Emperor Skywood suddenly turned his head to stare off into the distance. Whoosh! Space and time twisted, followed by a gray-robed elder appearing. The elder said respectfully, "Greetings, Sectlord."

"You are responsible for overseeing this everworld. Do you know what happened earlier?" Emperor Skywood asked. This was the territory of the Skywood Sect, and so everything here was under their supervision.

"Sectlord, the white-robed youth was Daolord Darknorth of Vastheaven Palace," the gray-robed elder said respectfully. "He purchased seven of the nine mighty novessence arts of Daolord Allgod, then went to Plumesoar Hall and purchased many treasures that those nine novessence arts need. Finally, he used two treasures, 'deluxe hellgold' and 'skyjewel bloodfruit', to trade for a flying vessel that can move a hundred times the speed of light."

"It seems this young fellow has quite a few treasures." Emperor Skywood chuckled as he praised Ning.

"He actually found skyjewel bloodfruit? Haha..." The blue-haired elder nodded as well.

The gray-robed elder continued, "Outside Plumesoar Hall, he was ambushed by the disciple of Daolord Kongsan. He was able to slay that disciple, a Daolord of the Third Step, with a wave of his hand. As a result, he ended up being chased and assaulted by Daolord Kongsan, who failed

in his pursuit and so asked Daolord Shaka for assistance. A short while later, Daolord Soleman and Daolord Skyaxe arrived as well, but they weren't able to breach the grand sealing formation. As for what happened afterwards inside the formation, there was no way for me to tell. I imagine Daolord Darknorth must've used some sort of special killer technique that slew both Daolord Shaka and Daolord Kongsan."

"Kongsan died, but Shaka probably did not," Emperor Skywood said. They only saw the scene picking up Daolord Kongsan's treasures, not Daolord Shaka's.

"The kid is quite impressive, and he seems to have had some incredible luck." Emperor Skywood instructed, "Make the arrangements for Daolord Darknorth to be given a Palace of Immortals medallion. He's qualified to enter it."

"Understood," the gray-robed elder said respectfully.

Chapter 42: Emperor Blueblaze

The gray-robed elder departed.

"You actually chose to proactively hand out a Palace of Immortals medallion. It seems you have taken a liking to the kid?" The blue-haired elder said.

"He's just a Daolord of the Second Step. Once he becomes a Daolord of the Fourth Step, he'll be of some use to me. Only then would he truly be worth recruiting and befriending." Emperor Skywood glanced at the blue-haired elder, then sighed. "Blueblaze, my old friend... you are my true helper, my right hand. We've experienced life-and-death battle on numerous occasions. Once again, I want to urge you to reconsider. Don't go any further into the Terror Starsea! The region you've delved into is already quite terrifying. If the two of us go any deeper into unknown territories, we can die at any moment."

"No." The blue-haired elder let out a sigh. "Aberrants like us are different from members of the Dao Alliance like you. Your Dao Alliance has an incredibly deep and solid foundation; all five of the other organizations combined still couldn't match you in this regard. That's why you can relax. We Aberrants, however, have to fight for every scrap we can get."

"The Hegemon is the cornerstone and the pillar of our race and kingdom; there's no way he can go out adventuring. As for those other Daolords, most of them are far too weak. That's why I was chosen to lead this squad deep into the Terror Starsea. This is the best option available to us. In addition... I've had enough of this eternal, endless life. If I'm lucky, I might find something within the Terror Starsea that will allow me to become much more powerful! Haha. By then, Skywood, you won't be a match for me."

Emperor Skywood was filled with mixed emotions. Compared to them, Daolords lived extremely short lives. Although they were able to dazzle others for a period of time, in the end they would still perish. Very few

were able to become Eternal Emperors, and those who were able to become Eternal Emperors who were his equal and who he could view as friends were even fewer.

Although Emperor Blueblaze belonged to a different organization, they truly did treat each other as bosom friends.

“Blueblaze, your protective abilities are indeed quite powerful,” Emperor Skywood said softly, “But you still can’t be too rash. If things look bad, you should flee right away! As for those Daolords under your command? If they die, they die. There’s no need to concern yourself too much about them. Even if they don’t die while adventuring, virtually all of them will be dead 108,000 chaos cycles from now.”

“Haha! I came here to bid you farewell, old friend. I’ve said everything I need to say. It’s time for me to leave. Once I come back from the Terror Starsea, I’ll find you and drink with you again.” When Emperor Blueblaze saw that look on Emperor Skywood’s face, he couldn’t help but laugh. “Hah! Don’t worry. I won’t die that easily.”

While laughing, Emperor Blueblaze transformed into a single blue streak of fire that disappeared into the horizon.

Emperor Skywood stood there in midair. He was silent for a long moment.

“I want to help you, but I cannot decide for the Dao Alliance.” Emperor Skywood shook his head, then flew towards his own estate.

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Within one of the many estates within Skywood City.

Some of the ancient Eternal Emperors living here had their own worries, but the Daolords were focused on the here and now. They did as they pleased with very few long-term concerns, by comparison.

“You, a Daolord of the Second Step, slew Kongsan! Not even I would be able to kill him. Darknorth, I feel confident that when you become a Daolord of the Fourth Step, you’ll be every bit my match. Come, let us drink!” Daolord Skyaxe was bare-chested, and his chest was covered with

fur. He picked up an enormous black vessel of wine, and Ning did the same. Ning explained, “I relied on my treasures to win. Big brother Skyaxe, you are ranked in the top five in the Endless Territories. It won’t be easy for me to catch up to you.”

“Top five my ass. I’m simply number five.” Skyaxe laughed loudly. The Daolords continued to chat rather casually with each other. For the most part, Ning just listened and responded as Skyaxe and Soleman spoke. They had experienced far more than he did and had visited many places. Just listening to them, Ning’s horizons were broadened. He repeatedly let out amazed sighs. Although he had visited the Archaeus region of the alternate universe, it seemed as though some of the dangerous regions in the Endless Territories were even more mysterious.

“The more you experience, the more you will understand.” Soleman sighed. “However... although adventuring is a good thing, you still run the risk of losing your life. For example, three of us headed out on our latest journey, but only two returned. My old friend Eastroad lost his life. Ugh.”

“Daolord Eastroad died?” Ning was surprised.

“Yes. He died just a thousand years ago.” Soleman nodded.

“There was nothing the two of us could do. We were fleeing for our lives as well; we simply didn’t have the ability to help him out.” Skyaxe slowly shook his head. “Eastroad was just a bit slower than us, and so he was surrounded and killed there.”

Moments later, Skyaxe let out a hearty laugh. “But so what? Even if we don’t die while adventuring, almost all of us will die after failing our Daomerge. While adventuring through the outside world, we’ve visited many ancient sites in search for good fortune that might help us further perfect our Daos, so that our chances during our Daomerge will be better. And I have to say, the adventuring life really is stirring. Those memories are a joy to think back to.”

“The two of us were in the process of disposing of the treasures we acquired on this trip.” Soleman looked at Ning. “After we finish, we plan to visit Eastroad’s homeland and help him take care of it. We didn’t expect to

run into you just as we were preparing to leave, junior apprentice-brother Darknorth. If you sent out your message just a short while later, we probably would've already left."

"That means the two of us were destined to meet with brother Darknorth," Skyaxe laughed.

"Senior apprentice-brother Soleman." Ning immediately said, "Are you still planning to go to Daolord Eastroad's homeland?"

"We are." Daolord Soleman nodded. "When we were in that deadly trap, we each told the others what our greatest regrets and hopes were. We agreed that the survivor would ensure that the wishes of the deceased were carried out! The one thing Eastroad was worried about prior to dying was what would happen to his homeland."

Ning nodded. "Senior apprentice-brother Soleman, I'm just journeying through the outside world, with no plans to go to any particularly dangerous areas for now. Leave it to me to take care of Daolord Eastroad's homeland. I'll make the arrangements for it."

Soleman and Skyaxe had helped him out. Although they hadn't been able to breach the formation and rescue him, for them to hurry over and try was already an act of kindness. Ning naturally wanted to help them out and repay them. As for Daolord Eastroad's homeland, the 'Eastroad Territory', Ning knew about it.

"You?" Daolord Soleman and Daolord Skyaxe exchanged a glance.

"If you were an ordinary Daolord, I probably wouldn't feel comfortable about it." Daolord Soleman laughed. "We're planning to send some of the treasures we acquired during our last expedition to his homeland, after all. Given that you killed Kongsan and acquired virtually all his treasures, I feel confident that you probably wouldn't pilfer any of the treasures we're planning to gift Eastroad's homeland."

Ning let out a resigned chuckle.

"Since you've made the offer... I'll accept it. Thank you for helping out," Daolord Soleman said.

"Don't worry about it at all." Ning smiled.

"I'll have to trouble you to deliver these treasures. As to what you plan to do with them once you bring them to Eastroad's homeland, that'll be up to you to decide." Daolord Soleman handed over a storage bracelet, which Ning accepted.

A short while later. "An emissary from the Skywood Sect has arrived." Daolord Soleman turned his head to glance towards the outside region, only to see a gray-robed elder walk towards them.

The gray-robed elder looked towards Ning, then said, "Per the sectlord's orders, I've come to deliver this Palace of Immortals medallion to Daolord Darknorth." As he spoke, he sent a medallion flying towards Ning.

"What's this?" Ning reached out to accept it. The medallion was pitch-black and cold. It was covered with many complex runes, but it had only a single word atop it – 'Soldier'.

The gray-robed elder immediately turned and left. As for Ning, he was quite startled. This was rather abrupt.

"Congratulations, junior apprentice-brother Darknorth. This is a medallion of the Dao Alliance's Palace of Immortals... but of course, it is only the most basic 'soldier' medallion." Daolord Soleman chuckled. "Once you become a Daolord of the Fourth Step, you'll earn a 'commander' medallion. By then, you'll be allowed to pay a visit to the Palace of Immortals. It might be of benefit to you."

"Oh? A 'commander' medallion?" Ning was curious.

"The Palace of Immortals is quite a special place. The lowest-ranking members all have 'soldier' medallions, but almost all of them are formidable Daolords of the Fourth Step. The most talented and powerful of Daolords will have a chance to earn a 'commander' medallion." Daolord Soleman explained, "The Palace of Immortals is a very mysterious place... but for now, you are nothing more than a pawn. There's no point in you visiting it. Only once you gain a 'commander' medallion would it be worth it."

“Mm.” Ning nodded. All places were the same. The higher your status was, the more would be made available to you.

“Generally speaking, these medallions are only issued by the Palace of Immortals. It sounds as though the sectlord of the Skywood Sect, Emperor Skywood, personally gave you this one. He’s one of the highest-ranking members of the Dao Alliance and has the authority to do this. It seems as though he’s noticed you. This is a good thing for you, but it could also be a bad thing.” Daolord Soleman chuckled. “While you are still weak, you should avoid the internal squabbles of the Dao Alliance.”

“I understand.” Ning nodded.

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Ning had come to Skywood City for the sake of the nine novessence arts. He had only spent another two years here due to Daolord Kongsan and all the other accompanying issues. Now that everything had concluded, he departed after spending another two days at Daolord Soleman’s place. He left Skywood City, heading towards the Eastroad Territory.

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